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FEBRUARY 2000
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G.K. Chesterton

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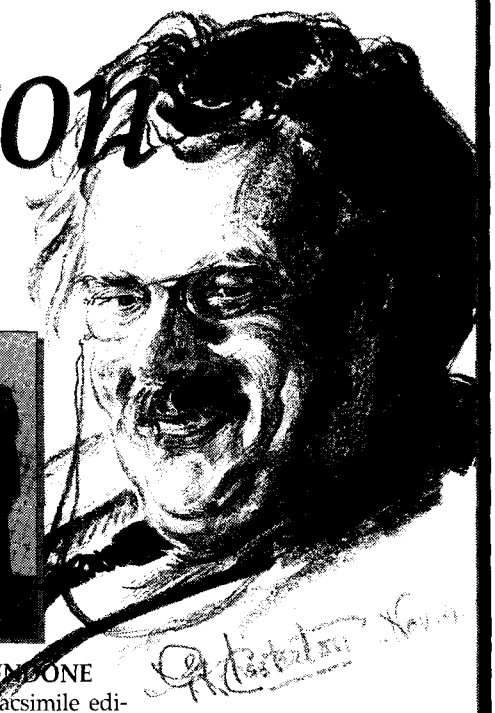

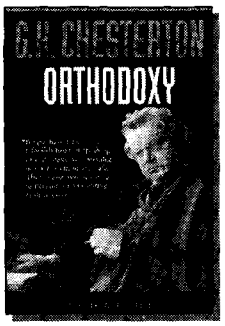

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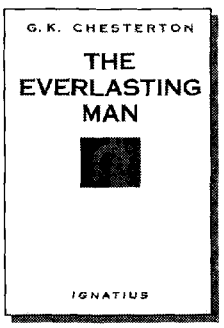

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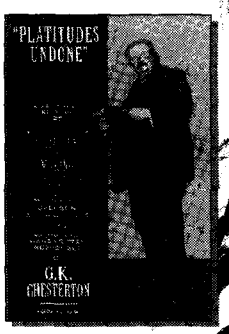

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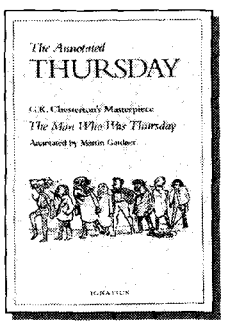

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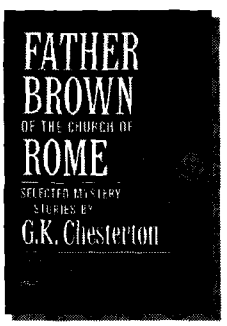

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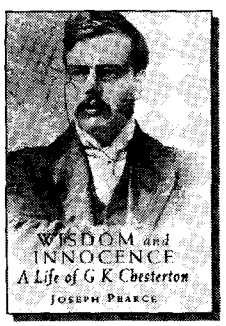

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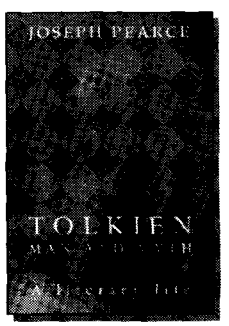

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Natural Law and Metaphysics

I was puzzled by many aspects of Phillip E. Johnson's exposition of the Grisez-Finnis natural law theory in his review of my book *In Defense of Natural Law* (November 1999). One mistake, however, is so fundamental and important that it cannot be passed over in silence. Professor Johnson says that the "project" of Germain Grisez and John Finnis, which I defend, "is to save natural law by reestablishing it on a secular foundation that does not appeal directly to those metaphysical claims that modern science rejects as outdated."

I cannot imagine where Prof. Johnson gets such an idea. Nowhere does it appear in the writings of Grisez or Finnis, nor do I say anything remotely like it in my book or anywhere else. Nor can it be inferred from anything they or I do say. Above all, it isn't true.

The Grisez-Finnis project is to provide a reflective critical account of the first principles of practical reason and identify the moral requirements that express the integral directiveness of these principles, thus providing rational guidance for human choices.

To that end, they and their collaborators (of whom I am one) state reasons and make arguments. The project succeeds or fails just insofar as our reasons are good or bad, our arguments sound or unsound. Indeed, for all intents and purposes the "project" just is the reasons we adduce for the positions we adopt and the arguments we make in support of those reasons. Of course, Prof. Johnson and other critics are perfectly entitled to reject our "project." They should, however, state what they find wrong with our reasons and arguments. To substitute speculation about motivation for a critique of reasons and arguments is certain to be idle and likely (as in this case) to occasion serious inaccuracy.

Prof. Johnson says that we "try to avoid calling attention to the fact" that our "project rests on metaphysical assumptions that the dominant scientific culture rejects" (though, tellingly, he says this in a sentence that ends up actually quoting Grisez, Finnis, and Joseph Boyle precisely as acknowledging that their view presupposes many currently controversial metaphysical and philosophical anthropological theses). But it turns out that Grisez and his colleagues have an odd way of "trying to avoid calling attention" to their metaphysical views: Grisez has written one entire book defending them (*Beyond the New Theism*) and coauthored another (*Free Choice: A Self-Referential Argument*, with Joseph Boyle and Olaf Tollefsen), and Grisez, Finnis, Boyle, Patrick Lee, and I have all forthrightly and vigorously criticized materialism, determinism, and other orthodox secularist metaphysical beliefs throughout our writings (including, it bears mentioning, in my writings in First Things).

Like Aristotle and Aquinas, we believe that a sound metaphysics attends to four related *but distinct* orders on and in which human reason is brought to bear: the orders of nature, technique, logic, and morality. Unlike Kantians, we decline to reduce the moral to the logical order; unlike utilitarians, we refuse to reduce morality to the order of technique; unlike some who claim the mantle of Aquinas, we do not reduce the moral order to the natural. Like Aquinas himself, and for his very reasons, we defend the irreducibility of the moral order: its first principles are, as he said, *per se nota* (known by grasping their meaning and reference) and indemonstrable (though standing in no need of demonstration).

In respecting and defending this irreducibility, we are no more concerned to "establish natural law on a

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secular basis," or to "avoid appealing to metaphysical claims rejected by modern science," than was Aquinas himself.

Does this mean that for us (or for Aquinas) ethics is entirely independent of metaphysics? Of course not—any more than it is independent of logic. As Prof. Johnson himself concedes, Grisez and Finnis acknowledge that a sound ethical theory requires a correct understanding of such metaphysical truths as the irreducibility of human intelligence to material substances, the reality of free choice, and, indeed, the irreducibility of the moral order to any other.

Robert P. George
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

Phillip E. Johnson replies:

My point was not that Germain Grisez and John Finnis, much less Robert P. George, are friendly to materialism. They are not. It was that they seem to have wanted their natural law system to be independent of metaphysics, so that even a materialist could accept it. Perhaps despite my best efforts, I have failed to understand the Grisez-Finnis system or its purpose. In that case I am in distinguished company, because "you just don't get it" is the persistent theme of Professor George's replies to the system's many academic critics. This makes me suspect that the most salient characteristic of the "new natural law" is its impenetrability to outsiders, including sympathetic outsiders who are professors of jurisprudence. Since natural law is by definition supposed to be accessible to ordinary human reason, this is a serious defect.

Cosmology and Creation

In my opinion, Professor William E. Carroll is terribly wrong in his view that the Big Bang does not lend support to the scriptural account of creation ("Aquinas and the Big Bang," November 1999). Though he does an excellent job of laying out Aquinas' position on creation and change, he draws a line between natural science and metaphysics that effectively disconnects them.

If the state of contemporary science is irrelevant to the metaphysical conclusion that there is a Creator, then the metaphysical conclusion that there is a Creator must likewise be irrelevant to the state of contemporary science. On this point, Prof. Carroll would please many a secular humanist. They reject metaphysics as irrelevant nonsense and say that science, stripped of all its interesting and important theological implications, should serve as the rule in settling every question of public policy.

Prof. Carroll also seems to say that the natural world does not give us any evidence of a Creator God. The attribute of "being" is all one needs. But surely the discovery of enormous complexity at the microbiological level is supporting evidence for the traditional argument from design. So too the scientific confirmation of the Big Bang theory: surely it lends remarkable support to the scriptural account that creation occurred at the beginning of time. I agree with Prof. Carroll that Big Bang cosmology does not gives us "scientific confirmation" of the view that creation had such an origin, but it does offer scientific evidence for that view. And it is this strong scientific evidence that is the basis for the distinct, but nonetheless complementary, metaphysical inference that there is a God.

If Scripture is right when it says that nature displays the goodness of God, then what scientists tell us about nature will always remain important for metaphysicians. We live in a time when there is increasing support from science for the view that there is a Creator God. This ought to bring joy to the heart of every Christian. If the reverse were true, we would live in a time when our faith would be increasingly threatened.

Our faith is at stake in the world. Metaphysics cannot be an abstract easy chair into which we comfortably settle. Metaphysics requires the Christian to be constantly engaged with the facts of experience in search of the hand of God.

Edward J. Furton
National Catholic Bioethics Center
Boston, Massachusetts

Regarding William E. Carroll's "Aquinas and the Big Bang": A theist ought not be overly cowed by Stephen Hawking et al. Hawking is a titanic intellect, and he is able to speculate in realms far beyond most of us. It is good to be clear, though, that speculation is precisely what we are being offered in the various "quantum fluctuation" or "no-boundary" proposals—speculation driven, moreover, by a metaphysical preference for a universe without a Creator. The physicists in question are not simply asking, "How might the universe have begun?"; they are asking, "How might the universe have begun *so as not to require a Creator*?" That is, they are a priori narrowing their field of inquiry simply because, for whatever reasons of their own, they prefer their universe to come with no Creator attached. What we have here are the speculations of some of the best modern physicists, impressive in their own right, but not the same thing as "the best of modern physics."

Without getting bogged down in technical detail, it is also worth noting (as Professor Carroll does) that virtually all of the "no-Creator" proposals wind up invoking a concept of nothing that is not quite "nothing"—either "nothing-plus-the-quantum-vacuum" or "nothing-plus-the-laws-of-physics," or some other version of what Keith Ward has called "a very complex and finely tuned nothing." They have not yet worked all the way back to St. Thomas' "uncaused cause."

Once upon a time, God was excluded from scientific consideration on the grounds that He was "unobservable"—there was no way to empirically verify His existence, or hang a gauge on Him to measure Him. Now, though, we are offered Hawk-

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ing's "imaginary time" or multiple universes as possible explanations for the origin and very specific nature of our universe. Yet both of these propositions are *in principle* "unobservable." God's existence can at least be inferred from His effects, but these others are simply placeholders for the atheistic premise. It all starts to look like what one wag has called an "atheism of the gaps," retreating to hidden corners where not only can no one look, but no one can *possibly* look.

Craig K. Galer
Lansing, Michigan

William E. Carroll replies:
It is precisely my contention that Big Bang cosmology does not "lend remarkable support" for "the scriptural account that creation occurred at the beginning of time." The "beginning" referred to in Big Bang cosmology is not the absolute beginning that is central to the doctrine of creation. To recognize that creation is a claim in metaphysics and theology is not to deny the importance of knowledge in the natural sciences for both metaphysics and theology.

Edward J. Furton is correct in observing that metaphysical reflection cut off from the insights of the natural sciences can easily become barren and irrelevant. But a failure to recognize the appropriate domains of the various disciplines of inquiry leads us away from the truth in each.

The subject of my essay was not the degree to which arguments from motion or from purpose in the natural order conclude in a knowledge of God. Such arguments, however, require not only the evidence of the natural sciences but also the insights of natural philosophy.

Aquinas was always careful to reject bad arguments used to reach true conclusions. Big Bang cosmology is not evidence for creation: cosmology accounts for changes in things and creation accounts for the existence of things. To deny that Big Bang cosmology supports the doctrine of creation is not to deny that the world of nature provides a way to know God.

As Craig K. Galer correctly observes, the use of variations in Big Bang cosmology to deny the existence of a Creator involves metaphysical (and, I would add, natural philosophical) presuppositions. When Stephen Hawking writes that the universe he describes would just "be," and hence would have no need for a Creator, he reveals an extraordinarily naive metaphysical notion of what it means to be.

Aquinas' analysis of creation allows us to recognize—and to reject—the metaphysical nonsense that accompanies much of the discussion about Big Bang cosmology. This seems to me to be a particularly important contribution for contemporary scientists, philosophers, and theologians.

On Dulles on Weigel on JP II

While thanking Father Avery Dulles for his thoughtful review of *Witness to Hope: The Biography of Pope John Paul II* (November 1999), I should like to clarify one point of fact for the record. The subject of my possibly writing a papal biography was first broached in a conversation I had with Joaquin Navarro-Valls, the Holy Father's press spokesman, in May 1995. The Pope became aware of this discussion and, at a dinner in December 1995 that was also attended by Fr. Richard John Neuhaus, John Paul II encouraged me to take on the project, at the same time promising his cooperation. But the Pope did not initiate the idea of my writing his biography, as some might mistakenly infer from Fr. Dulles' statement that "The Pope, in fact, asked George Weigel to write this book."

George Weigel
Ethics & Public Policy Center
Washington, D.C.

I immensely appreciated Avery Dulles' thorough review and critique of George Weigel's biography of John Paul II, *Witness to Hope*. I do think, however, that Father Dulles missed an extremely important point, i.e., John Paul II's insistence that he be "understood from inside." Here Wojtyla, the phenomenologist, is stating the key principle not only for understanding his true self and the substance of his humanistic philosophy, but also Vatican II's projection of Christ as God's solution to what it means to be a human being in the modern world. Weigel's methodology in this book can be a first step for us to discern this whole series of interlinked understandings.

(The Rev.) John F. Kobler, CP
Chicago, Illinois

The Affable Chesterton

In "Chesterton and the Thereness of It" (Public Square, November 1999), Richard John Neuhaus writes that Chesterton understood that "the Church is about truth." Another comment refers to Chesterton's "civility and affability in the many disputes he relished." Yet Chesterton was not very civil or affable in references to Protestantism and Martin Luther. If the Church is about truth, should Chesterton not have acknowledged that it was because of Luther that the Catholic Church recognized that the practice of indulgences was contrary to Christian truth?

George Weber
Portland, Oregon

RJN replies:
To my knowledge, Chesterton did not disagree with Luther on the sale of indulgences. It is true that he was frequently dismissive of the Reformation. Had he encountered worthy interlocutors representing the classic Reformation traditions—and it is a pity he did not—I have no doubt he would have done so with his accustomed civility and affability.

Anti-Racist Racism

Richard John Neuhaus' observations on Bishop Joseph Fiorenza's condem-

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nation of those who voted in favor of California Proposition 209 as "racists" were far too gentle ("The Magisterial 'We,'" November 1999). The bishop is surely in need of a little fraternal correction. He is obviously advocating "affirmative action." Affirmative action is a code word for policies which require, principally, that some individual be unjustly deprived of a right or benefit solely because of his race so that the right or benefit in question can be conferred on another, less qualified person, on the basis of the latter's race. This is the very definition of the racism that the good bishop correctly condemns. It is completely contrary to the charity we should have for all of our neighbors in their unique, God-given individuality. It's treating them simply as members of their respective herds.

Edward Kramer
North Olmsted, Ohio

The Sum of the Insignificant

Another molecule, this one deliberate
and in the act of forming water.
Why does it bother?
I consult the wind but learn little.
Usually I can count on its salient
asides—1989 would be just one example.
I was apprenticed to nature then,
or so I thought. I wrote of the Lake:
"I can detect its immense thinking."
Imagine.
Just now a gull observes me
from his long face. A dune beetle
rights itself and proceeds, but to what end?
"It's been three years since Phil died,"
I complain to the sand.
Ancient pause.
"Yes," they sigh at last, "we know all
about it. But you lot are ever dire.
Widows, the fatally blemished, the driven to drink, all sons.
And then, in our condition,
the troubles we've seen. . . ."
But I was distracted by a low speeding cumulus
darkening the waves running toward me.
"What turtles have you seen?"
I mumbled dully, but it was too late.
Under the waves, celestial night was emerging.
The sun, at the moment of its glory, sat fatly
over Michigan like a pear on a plate.
And all the timber that once stood apart
now leaned together to form a shore
of surprising conviction.
It was the kind of moment one waits for
all one's life, taking one's life to unnatural places
for, until the life itself is strange and ablaze.
"Show me the way,"
I said to the endlessness of things.
And lo, a great silvery compass
rose over us all, yes it did.

Sara Miller

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THIS TIME

Saving Chicago

James Nuechterlein

When I heard that the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) planned to send 100,000 volunteers to Chicago next summer to evangelize the city, my first reaction was, Good luck. (Perhaps I have been living in New York too long.) Evangelism, of course, is essential to Christianity. The Great Commission enjoins the faithful to spread the Good News to all the world, Chicago presumably included. Christians disagree among themselves how best to obey that injunction almost as vigorously as they agree that, in some manner, they must in fact obey it.

In the Missouri Synod Lutheranism of my childhood, the style of evangelism was not much different from that of today's SBC. We hadn't the numbers to match anything like the SBC's Chicago enterprise, but we were of a similar spirit. Every fall LCMS congregations would celebrate Mission Sunday; often a number of them would join together to organize a Mission Festival. Missionaries were heroic figures in our eyes, and, unlike today, when they often function as little more than ecclesiastical social workers, their animating purpose was to win souls for Christ. We burst with enthusiasm as we gathered funds to send missionaries across the globe, ranging, as the words of the popular hymn had it, "from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand."

Styles of piety change. As my initial response to the SBC Chicago venture indicates, I am less persuaded than I once was of the efficacy, perhaps even the wisdom, of mass evangelism programs. But I remain ambivalent, and I have no problem wishing the Baptists well in their efforts.

Not everyone, it seems, agrees. On November 27, 1999, the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago released a letter over the signature of Executive Director Paul H. Rutgers to Paige Patterson, president of the SBC and of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, urging the SBC to "modify" its plans. The letter from the Council (which consists of forty representatives of the region's Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, mainline Protestant, and Jewish communities) warned that the SBC's efforts, "however well-intentioned," might well "disrupt the pattern of peaceful interfaith relations in our community and unwittingly abet the designs of those who seek to provoke hate crimes by fomenting faith-based prejudice."

The letter complains that the SBC's "call for 'an army of believers to converge on Chicago' . . . evokes images of a crusade." The original crusades, of course, had some very unpleasant consequences, and the Council suggests that it could all happen again. "We are particularly disturbed that the two groups who appear to be among your primary targets, Muslims and Jews, have during the past six months been victims of faith-based terrorist violence in Chicago." While the Council charitably concedes that the SBC volunteers would no doubt arrive "with entirely peaceful intentions," it nonetheless worries that "a campaign of the nature and scope you envision could contribute to a climate conducive to hate crimes."

The Council insists that it is not opposed to evangelization per se. It is, after all, "protected by First Amendment guarantees of freedom of speech." (What higher mandate could there be?) Indeed, the letter goes on, some of the churches represented on the Council themselves engage, like the Baptists, in "seeking converts," though, presumably unlike the Baptists, those churches "try to be sensitive to local realities"—a reference, one supposes, to that peculiar "faith-based terrorist violence" that seems to plague Chicago. Given such local realities, the Council helpfully suggests that the SBC confine its Chicago initiative to "service projects, such as food delivery to the homeless and building or rehabilitating affordable housing."

If the Council hoped to deter President Patterson and his colleagues, it woefully miscalculated. Dr. Patterson begins his uncompromising response, dated November 29, by noting that the Council's November 27 letter had been published in media outlets before it had made its way to him. "Letters released to the media prior to delivery to their intended recipients," he says, "can never be considered as serious attempts to engender either cooperation or understanding." Their purpose "is to intimidate rather than to negotiate." "Pleased be advised," he goes on, "that all such unworthy attempts will fail to intimidate Southern Baptists from fulfilling the task assigned by Jesus in the Great Commission to [carry] the life-transforming gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the world, of which Chicago remains a vital part."

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The SBC, Dr. Patterson makes clear, is not simply an adjunct of Habitat for Humanity. "We will, indeed, attempt to provide for those in physical need, but we will also point people to the crucified and risen Lord Jesus. . . . To all who wish to hear we will share the hope of eternal life and the forgiveness of sins through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

Patterson turns the Council's argument back on itself. "If there is violence or 'hate crimes,' such will not be perpetrated by Southern Baptists or in any way engendered by our compassionate message. To the contrary, we are much more likely to be the targets of such attacks. Furthermore, letters like the one that you wrote to the press, under the guise of writing to me, are more likely the stuff from which hate crimes emerge."

Finally, with reference to the Council's declaration that it recognizes the SBC's right to evangelize, President Patterson acidly suggests that "you appear to desire religious liberty for . . . evangelicals as long as they agree not to exercise that freedom." He signs off with this: "Friends, we will see you [next summer] armed with peace on earth and good will for all men and hearts full of love for you and all the noble people of Chicago." Then the delicious P.S.: "We have yet to receive your letter."

There is little doubt, in my mind anyway, that Patterson got the better of his exchange with the Council. But there are larger issues at stake. Evangelism was until recent years an unproblematic matter: it was simply what Christians did, and nobody doubted the propriety of their doing it. Things have lately become more complicated. Popular usage increasingly marks a distinction between *evangelizing* (acceptable) and *proselytizing* (bad form, at the very least).

The distinction, variable and imprecise at best, is notably difficult to maintain in practice. Among aggressive secularists and certain religious liberals who have forgotten why they were religious in the first place, virtually all forms of evangelism collapse into proselytism. Even less sweeping critics regularly place the Southern Baptists on the wrong side of the divide. They object in particular to the SBC's purported habit of targeting specific groups for conversion.

Jewish organizations have led the opposition. They complain of SBC resolutions and programs that designate Jews as objects of missionary efforts. Of special concern is the cooperation between Southern Baptists and messianic Jewish groups (e.g., Jews for Jesus) that insist that Jews can remain fully Jewish even while recognizing Jesus as the messiah. Michael S. Miller, Executive Vice President of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, accuses the SBC of complicity in messianic Jewish organizations' "deceptive tactics" of employing such traditional Jewish symbols as prayer shawls and skullcaps.

Once again, Dr. Patterson is unapologetic. "Southern Baptists are targeting nobody specifically," he told the *New York Times*. "Our expressed mandate from Jesus is to take the gospel to the whole world. Jewish people are part of that world." He insists, furthermore, that messianic Jews cannot fairly be accused of deception as long as they make clear their belief in Jesus. He suggests that critics, Jews and non-Jews alike, complain of SBC evangelistic practices not because they are objectionable in themselves but because they might be successful.

Cultural sensibilities are clearly in play in all this, but they are not finally the issue. Between Jews and Christians, and between Christians and other Christians, matters go deeper. Relations between Jews and Christians will be forever agonistic: Jesus cannot for them be other than a figure of contention. Good manners count, but they can go only so far. Intra-Christian differences are more complex. They have to do, in the end, with how Christians respond to the critique of modernity. Many of them have been so abashed by that critique as to fashion a gospel that is no longer a scandal. Others, the SBC perhaps included, have too much reduced the scandal to comfortable assurance.

Should the Baptists go to Chicago? Yes, they should, even if one wishes they would go more in the spirit of Paul Ricoeur's second naivete—the simplicity that lies on the far side of complexity. But were that the case, of course, they might not go at all. FT

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Opinion

Remembering Robert Wood

Laura Marsan

I am at a Labor Day cookout in Finneytown, Ohio, and all the food has been eaten. Kids run around the yard playing a messy game of tee-ball as the sun dips below the horizon. Fluorescent pink plastic balls and bats fly everywhere. The adults sit lazily, and talk turns from mild state-of-the-nation chit-chat to the heated topic of school shootings and rampages by loners. Some wonder, *Why is this happening?* Some propose legislation: *We need more gun control laws.* One woman, a young mother, proposes a solution. *String them up by their balls,* she says plainly of the shooters who have survived their own carnage. *Kip Kinkel, Andrew Goldstein, the kid in Paducah,* she says, *string them up by their balls and I guarantee you it'll never happen again.*

A few people second the motion, a few crack open the cooler to get more beer. But the suggestion gives everyone pause to consider and, suddenly, I recall something buried deep. Actually, two things.

First: It's third grade and Robert Wood (thick black Buddy Holly-style glasses, floodwaters, ambling walk) has dropped his brown bag lunch. Alex Rollins snatches it lickety-split and begins to bat it around, hot potato-style. A small crowd forms and now it's a game, each player batting and exclaiming *It's infected!* or *Retard's lunch! Retard's lunch!*

In between players, Robert tries to catch it. Of course he misses, and I, suddenly joining the crowd, come up with my own bit of ingenuity. I modify his name. Robert becomes Roberta. As in, he catches like a girl. And not stopping there, I modify once more. *Bertha! Bertha! Bertha!* The chant is adopted.

Minutes pass and then the bell rings. The lunch falls to the ground as kids line up to go inside. Robert, his face red, runs and picks it up, then joins the end of the line.

When I taught high school in South Central L.A., I used to boast to hardened Los Angelenos, *I was raised in the mildest part of the Midwest.* When I lived in New York City at the height of its homicide count, I'd say, *We have fewer corpses in the small towns.* As these memories float to the surface, I wonder if I was only talking to myself.

Second: In the ninth grade, Robert became friends with a new student, David. They traveled the small grounds of the school together in green army fatigues and combat boots. They brought military memorabilia from weekend trade shows to school. They talked about plastic explosives and mines and read Vietnam-era code books during study hall. They kept copies of *Soldier of Fortune* and *Guns and Ammo* under their textbooks during World History. As far as I know, their obsessions were merely fantasies. They never caused any trouble.

In the ninth grade, I was frightened by the possibility of a nuclear war. So my friends and I came up with a simple conclusion about Robert and David's transformation from geeks to warmongers: they were both nuts.

But at the cookout, I wonder. Presented with the same set of circumstances today, would Robert have taken his obsession with firearms a step further? After all, he and David predated Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold by about a decade. Would they, like them, have brought guns to school and threatened us? Would they have opened fire? Seeing the savagery Robert Wood suffered day after day, and knowing now what I didn't know then—that his own life felt like a war—would I have blamed him?

Until recently, I never told my parents about Robert, and, as far as I know, most of our tauntings went undetected by homeroom teachers, playground monitors, room mothers, or the principal. Would we have been kinder nine-year-olds had we been caught and made aware of the damage we were inflicting? Hard to say.

Anyone who is honest about childhood knows that it is part innocence and part savagery. The same goes for teasing. The parts that are innocent are automatic—craning one's neck to see the source of commotion in the center of a crowd. And the parts that are savage, simply, sadly, exist outside the realm of reason.

See, I didn't hate Robert Wood. In truth, I can recall no feelings of ill-will toward him whatsoever. Outside of school, outside of the tauntings themselves, I never gave the boy a second thought. He was merely the weakest, and therefore a target.

What I wonder now is if there is more than one way to kill a person. Americans talk about physical murder often, but doesn't it, like most things, have an invisible counterpart: the murder of the soul?

Of course, some of these criminal loners may have been motivated by pure evil. How can anyone explain the macabre nature of Jeffrey Dahmer's detached

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cannibalism? But for those whom we hear about recently (the boys in Columbine, Paducah, Jonesboro, etc.) and the information that is surfacing about their years of schoolyard torment, I have to wonder if the woman's solution at the cookout isn't redundant. They were strung up by their balls for years before committing any crime.

I don't know what has happened to Robert. He, like me, would be around thirty now. Once, I looked in the phone book for his name. Another time, I called the high school and asked if they knew where he might be. *His family moved out of the area one year after he graduated*, the school secretary said. That is all anybody knows.

Many people lose touch with their past, I tell myself. It's no big deal. After all, I've never been to a class reunion and I've lost touch with most of the people I thought would be my friends for life. I had all but forgotten Robert Wood for a while. Now, with every new school shooting, every loner's rampage, the memory of him leaps to mind. Like a tongue against a sore tooth, I rub over and over it despite the sting.

To ease my guilty conscience I imagine him in a gleaming part of the country, a new capital of the booming economy. Sometimes Silicon Valley. Sometimes Redmond, Washington. Robert as a sort of Bill Gates type who finally has gotten his revenge on us, and then some.

I try to imagine him in a job that employs all his talents, surrounded by people who admire who he truly is. I try to imagine a grown man who is now at peace about his tormented youth and the tormentors who harassed him.

Perhaps he tells his children, *These were the times that built my character.* Or perhaps, *I learned then how to be independent of peer opinion.* Sometimes childhood, and humanity itself, can have a very dark heart, he may say. But once you learn that, your compassion doubles and your humanity becomes infinite.

I think of a man who is contented and free.

I imagine all this in lieu of the apology that I never gave and the protest against my peers that I never offered. And when in quiet remembrance I hit the snags of the dark sins of my past, I thank God for the merciful act of wishful thinking.

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Thomas Sieger Derr

"Witches Heal." "The Goddess is Alive and Magic is Afoot." A picture of Earth with the enjoinder, "Love Your Mother." These are popular bumper stickers in my "alternative" town, where old hippies and young New Agers mingle on Main Street more or less amiably with us non-hip, married-with-children types. We get along well enough, and probably even find each other a bit amusing. But our amused tolerance on Main Street may yield to something less accommodating if the bumper stickers become public policy.

Consider the "Earth Charter" movement, a project of serious, determined, and sometimes zealous environmentalists worldwide. They intend their document, which has worked its way through several years of preparatory meetings, to be presented to the United Nations in 2000, adopted by the General Assembly in 2002, and eventually achieve the enduring status of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. An ambitious project, it has drawn together in one crusade some wildly different characters, including formidable names like Mikhail Gorbachev and Maurice Strong. Gorbachev, having so dramatically fallen from his post as the second most powerful man in the world, and having failed in an attempt to come back as Russian president, has reinvented himself as a world environmentalist, founder and president of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) "Green Cross International." Strong is a Canadian businessman, former Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), and Secretary-General both of the 1972 Stockholm Conference and the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. Now he is president of the Earth Council, based in Costa Rica, another force behind the Earth Charter. Complementing their organizational muscle is Steven Rockefeller, Professor of Religion at Middlebury College, and perhaps the movement's chief intellectual.

The Earth Charter is the project of a loose group of NGOs who hoped to use their accreditation to the 1992 UN "Conference on Environment and Development" at Rio de Janeiro (the "Earth Summit") to get a document containing some more radical environmental views on the formal agenda and, if possible, adopted. The official channels proved resistant, so the sponsors, led by Strong and Gorbachev and some UN personnel, registered as an NGO after Rio to advance their cause. They established links with other interested organizations, solicited input

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from different religious groups, and in general made every conceivable effort to broaden their base and justify their claim to be producing "a true People's Earth Charter." Getting the UN to adopt the Charter will be a tough sell, nonetheless. The first "Benchmark Draft" of March 1997 makes it clear that there is a fundamental incompatibility of ideologies at work.

Throughout the long process of drafting and revising, Charter proponents sought to preserve two core values: sustainable living and conservation of nature. The draft supports these values not just by pragmatic calculations but by a kind of "spiritual vision," conceived broadly enough to elicit support from many different religious traditions. We are in a crisis because of the present forms of industrial society, it says, and we need a change of course so radical it can come only from new values—or long-lost ancient values needing rediscovery. The promoters believe that only religion has the power to effect such change, so the support of the world's religions was deemed crucial. Throughout the drafting process, "values facilitators" worked with this animating vision in mind. The intention throughout was to produce something new, arresting, inspiring, going beyond the practical cast of most UN reports.

And it surely is different. The Earth Charter has a quasi-religious tone, an overarching pantheism that not everyone will share. "The Earth itself is alive," it declares, echoing the "Gaia" hypothesis that Earth is in effect a single organism deserving of the name of a goddess, here "Mother Earth," a name deliberately chosen for such symbolism. All creatures on Earth have moral considerability, perhaps even moral equality. We must live in solidarity not only with the rest of humanity, but with "the community of life." We must "respect Earth and all life," because "Earth, each life form, and all living beings possess intrinsic value and warrant respect independently of their utilitarian value to humanity." We must therefore practice nonviolence not only toward other persons, but toward "other life forms and Earth." We must "treat all creatures with compassion and protect them from cruelty and wanton destruction." Our goal is to "grow into a family of cultures that allows the potential of all persons to unfold in harmony with the Earth Community," preserving "a deep sense of belonging to the universe."

This is simply not a declaration in the UN mold. From the 1972 Stockholm conference to the 1992 meeting in Rio, the UN conferences and official reports on the environment have been dominated by the developing nations, who mean to keep developing themselves out of poverty. No environmental document that recommends actions that might impede development stands a ghost of a chance of gaining official recognition. These countries see Western environmentalism as a form of neocolonialism, and the fear that ecological concerns will be used to keep the poorer nations in permanent subordination leaps off the pages of UN documents.

Virtually every environmental consideration the UN does propose is advanced in such a way that it allows the developing countries room to grow economically, even at some environmental cost, using boilerplate such as this (from Rio): "Standards applied by some countries [read: the wealthy developed ones] may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries." The notion popular among some Western environmentalists that poorer nations should scale back their ambitions and preserve their simple ways is dismissed out of hand: "The idea that developing countries would do better to live within their limited means is a cruel illusion" (The World Commission on Environment and Development, or "Brundtland Commission").

The entire UN program in these matters now flies under the banner of "sustainable development," which succinctly puts the two principles of economic growth and environmental protection in that order. Environmental programs are to serve human needs, and that is their whole point. The UN's view is, in short, firmly, resolutely, uncompromisingly anthropocentric. Always, people first.

The contrast between the two viewpoints is particularly vivid on the matter of population growth. It is an article of faith among the Earth Charter group that the planet is overpopulated and getting worse, and that serious efforts to limit our numbers are in order. Delegates from the developing parts of the world, again suspicious that the West wishes to curb their growth, and convinced by recent UN figures that birth rates are falling nearly everywhere anyway, regularly stymie efforts of the population controllers to write their anti-natalist opinions into UN documents. Population limitation policies belong exclusively to the nations concerned, and only when they would enhance development. "Of all things in the world," said the Stockholm declaration almost defiantly, "people are the most precious." Even the Brundtland Commission, which at first glance seems to be an exception with its blunt language about unsustainable population growth, ends in a familiar UN place: "Talking of population just as numbers glosses over an important point: People are also a creative resource, and this creativity is an asset societies must tap. . . . People are the ultimate resource." In short, anthropocentrism remains firmly in control here, too.

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There are occasional exceptions to this focus in isolated sentences, which those sympathetic to the Earth Charter have sometimes lifted out of context as evidence of UN support for their cause. These exceptions are really internal contradictions that get into the documents because this is committee writing, not Holy Writ, and every group wants its say, including the anti-anthropocentrists. These odd sentences—and that is all they are—are just inserted into sections whose main point always is to stress the need to manage resources to meet the needs of a growing human population.

This first "Benchmark Draft" was not forged without internal disagreement, and the process has had to be kept open for further discussion. The new "Benchmark Draft II" appeared last April, correcting some, though not all, of the maladroit parts of the original. The development issue, for one, has been rescued from obscurity. Now the principles of the Charter are all said to be "principles for sustainable development"; and although respect for Earth and ecological integrity are placed first, a separate highlighted section has been created, called "A Just and Sustainable Economic Order." Here development is primary, with ecological concerns factored into the process. In this section at least the new version really does read like a UN document.

Throughout there are new phrases that seem to honor the equal value of all humans, lest the incipient antihumanism of the first draft prevail. We are now to affirm, echoing the language of UN documents and especially the UDHR, "respect for the inherent dignity of every person." We must "secure the human rights of all women, men, and children." We are to "honor and defend the right of all persons, without discrimination, to an environment supportive of their dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being."

Gone too is the naive claim that social justice and sound ecology automatically reinforce each other. Instead the new document speaks more realistically of the need to "balance and harmonize" competing interests, including balancing "economic progress with the flourishing of ecological systems." Whereas the first draft, in full crisis mode, declared that "we must reinvent industrial-technological civilization," this one commends sophisticated technology that is environmentally friendly. Smart scientific ecology rather than pantheistic reverence dominates the section on "Ecological Integrity," again adopting the tone of the UN documents.

Some unfortunate points have mercifully been dropped. The document no longer feels it necessary to point out that we are part of the universe. The reference to nonviolence has been separated from the context where it was to be directed at "other life forms" and been scaled back to "practic[ing] nonviolence . . . to resolve conflict," although there does remain a suggestively malleable remark about "awakening to a new reverence for life." "Mother Earth," despite her many fans, is gone: instead of the "Earth itself is alive," we have, "Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life." Care for the Earth has been placed firmly in the context of preserving human life rather than standing alone as an independent value.

But these revisions have not entirely capitulated to UN anthropocentrism. The population issue, which the Earth Charter Commission had always found difficult, has been recaptured by the controllers and emerged in sharper form than in the first draft: "A dramatic rise in population" is part of the environmental crisis, and "responsible reproduction" is enjoined. It keeps the language about the "intrinsic value of all beings," which the Charter's originators regard as indispensable and the heart of the change in values they desire. We are enjoined to "declare our responsibility [not only] to one another, [but also] to the greater community of life." We humans have "kinship with all life" and need "humility regarding the human place in the larger scheme of things." We must "treat all living beings with compassion." Peace is "harmonious relationships" not only with other people, but "other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which we are a part." Earth is to be treated with respect, quite aside from any utilitarian value it might have for us. A whiff of vague spirituality has survived in the call to "seek wisdom and inner peace." Just as vaguely, we are told that we "require an inner change—a change of heart and mind" that involves an "integration of knowledge with love and compassion."

There is also an unfortunate "Christmas tree" habit of hanging on irrelevancies to please certain elements in the supporting coalition. So there are calls for universal health care, education, disarmament, the "equitable distribution of wealth," "racial, religious, ethnic, and socioeconomic equality," participatory democracy, and "the full and equal participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political, and social life"—gifts for just about everyone in a document whose ostensible focus is on the environment.

The Earth Charter was meant by its proponents at Rio to be adopted by the UN in 1995, and when that dealine passed, in 2000, even though there was always some pessimism and cynicism about its prospects. Now, although the Charter may be "presented" at the UN in 2000, the hoped-for date of

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adoption is now 2002, not as dramatic a time as the millennial year, though organizers have rescued some of the lost symbolism by noting that the new date is the tenth anniversary of Rio. Along with the time delay, allowing the campaign longer to work up support, the revisions in Draft II have probably increased the document's chances in the UN, and the revision process is not over yet.

Still, the principal difficulty in the way of UN adoption of the Charter remains, a fundamental incompatibility in the general outlooks of the two sides. The UN principles emphasize environmental management to serve human need, promoting economic development, science and technology, national sovereignty, and, gingerly, restraints on population growth where that would help, leaving the choices up to separate national policies. Members of the Charter coalition, diverse as it is, may still be roughly summarized as anti-anthropocentric—ambivalent at best about further economic growth, skeptical of science and technology (except for the Internet, which they have embraced with a passion), convinced of impending disaster, even in matters like population growth where recent evidence indicates otherwise, in favor of an international control regime that will limit state sovereignty (and even, perhaps, individual rights), and also, somewhat paradoxically, committed to "decentralized, relatively self-reliant, local economies."

There is also, undoubtedly, a kind of neo-paganism among many Charter supporters, whose antipathy to modern society in all its aspects, from industrial to religious, has led them back to a radical premodernism, a pan-religiousness that appears to be some (partly imagined) basic form of religious life before the destructive divisiveness of the historic religions appeared. Many ascribe sentience, psychic and spiritual reality, to all things, not only living creatures but natural entities like rivers, forests, ecosystems, even stars—a kind of mystic ecocentrism, one might say. All, apparently without exception, attribute intrinsic value, even rights, to nonhuman entities.

These views have found their way into the actual Charter text at different stages, for the most part only as suggestive phrases; and many have been diluted to the vanishing point along the tortuous way to the current version. Charter drafters have made many changes that have moved their document closer to the UN position, but one must assume the compromises are grudgingly done and only for tactical reasons. Changes made for the sake of gaining acceptability in governmental circles are likely to represent sacrifices of values held dear by the Charter movement, risking some loss of enthusiasm among its original supporters. There is obviously a limit to how far they are willing to go in currying official favor, a point beyond which, as they have bluntly said, they will not negotiate with the UN but instead will "go it alone," promulgating their Charter without official backing.

What will happen? The second benchmark draft of the Earth Charter is certainly less offensive than the first. Perhaps some of the remaining oddities will be pared if the General Assembly ever considers the document for formal adoption. But maybe it will never get that far, and be left standing alone as an NGO project, a "People's Earth Charter" as the proponents call it, honored by those to whom it speaks meaningfully, ignored by the rest. It is hard in any case to imagine that it will ever achieve the status of the UDHR.

If I were to guess—and that is all any outsider can do at this point—I would say that the language of intrinsic value still in the Charter, granting nature some immunity from human need, language which, as noted, the Earth Charter Commission regards as essential and nonnegotiable, will prove the final stumbling block to official acceptance. As long as the Charter sounds like the bumper stickers of my New Age and hippie neighbors, I just can't see it being adopted by the terribly unhip General Assembly of the United Nations.

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Donne Undone

Carol Iannone

However much traditional standards are leveled in our late democratic society, American theater will persist in challenging putatively oppressive values and the figures who enforce them.

So I concluded after seeing *Wit*, the play by Margaret Edson that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1999 and is currently running off-Broadway in New York City. It presents the story of the last days of Vivian Bearing, Ph.D., as she battles the advanced cancer that we know from the outset will take her life. *Wit* is often touching and even funny, despite its focus on sickness and death, and a good actress can make the character compelling. But the play is also rather maddening. Vivian is something of a stereotype, and

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an outdated stereotype at that; it is difficult to imagine a professor of this kind—the astringent and unfeeling academic—in the touchy-feely world of the contemporary university. Even more maddening is what the play does to Vivian's subject matter. Not only must the professor/protagonist/authority figure be cut down to size; the great John Donne, to whose work Vivian has devoted her life, must be cut down as well.

Donne, seventeenth-century poet and Anglican divine, was perhaps the premier exponent of the "metaphysical" school of poetry that was characterized by "wit," the clever deployment of language in grappling with large subjects pertaining to God and the soul. Donne scholars, we are given to understand, consider themselves superior to those who study other authors. To comprehend Donne takes exacting, meticulous, and often torturous mental effort, for he is, as the play reminds us repeatedly, an immensely difficult poet. Compared to Donne, we are told, "Shakespeare is a Hallmark card."

As a teacher and Donne scholar, Vivian has been equally austere—strict, uncompromising, ungiving. Not surprisingly, she is a lonely figure with no real human attachments. In the course of her illness, however, she undergoes great suffering and humiliation. In a familiar pattern, she comes to see the inadequacies of her hyper-intellectualized view of life and begins to experience the emotions she never acknowledged in herself, as well as gaining sympathy for others. In sum, her ordeal softens her, and, in an almost childlike way, she begins to need and appreciate other people's small acts of kindness.

The more human Vivian grows, however, the more the poet shrinks. Throughout the play, we are primed for the denigration of Donne. We hear repeatedly of his "ingenuity," "virtuosity," "vigorous intellect," "mental agility," "agile wit"; he writes poems that are "brilliantly convoluted," in which "intractable mental puzzles" are pored over and "metaphysical quandaries are addressed, but never resolved." We begin to see Donne as a version of the pre-cancer Vivian—bloodless, cerebral, someone who enjoys the exercise of mental faculties for its own sake.

At one point in the play, Vivian appears in flashback before her class, interpreting one of the *Holy Sonnets*—a sequence generally regarded as among the greatest works of religious poetry in the English language, with lines that can leave you wide-eyed as you read them ("Batter my heart, three-personed God"; "Death, be not proud, though some have called thee mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so"). But for Vivian, the Donne of the sonnets revels only in unresolved complexities. Here is the poem Vivian presents to her class, Holy Sonnet 9, as printed in the text of the play:

> *If poysonous minerals, and if that tree,*
> *Whose fruit threw death on else-immortal us,*
> *If lecherous goats, if serpents envious*
> *Cannot be damn'd; Alas! why should I bee?*
> *Why should intent or reason, borne in mee,*
> *Make sinnes, else equal, in mee, more heinous?*
> *And mercy being easie, and glorious*
> *To God, in his sterne wrath, why threatens hee?*
> *But who am I, that dare dispute with thee?*
> *O God, Oh! of thine onely worthy blood,*
> *And my teares, make a heavenly Lethean flood,*
> *And drown in it my sinnes blacke memorie.*
> *That thou remember them, some claime as debt,*
> *I thinke it mercy, if thou wilt forget.*

The upshot of Vivian's overwrought explication is that "in the end [the speaker] finds God's *forgiveness* hard to believe, so he crawls under a rock to *hide* . . . to *disappear*." If we take a closer look at the poem, it becomes clear that Vivian may well be misreading the conclusion. The speaker is not asking God to forget *him*, only his *sins*. The antecedent for "them" in the penultimate line is the "sinnes" of the preceding one; in the closing couplet, the speaker is saying that although some people want to remind him of his *debt* in the face of God's justice, he is asking for God's *mercy*, and the forgetting, the forgiveness, of his sins.

Overall, the poem is clever, but not at the expense of the heart, and it is not nearly so God-awful complicated as the play would have it. The speaker tries a couple of rationalizations to help him get out from under the burden of sin. Fallen nature is full of creatures that do bad things, so why should man alone be damned? If God is merciful, why does He threaten punishment? These questions, and the "taking thought" that is behind them, cannot relieve the weight of guilt that is obviously prompting them. In that sense, the questions do present unresolvable quandaries. So the speaker drops the attempt at rationalization and turns imploringly to his God. He asks that in the blood of Christ and in his own tearful repentance his sins be "drown[ed]," drowned in "a heavenly Lethean flood" of forgetfulness, a forgiveness that would obliterate even the "blacke memorie" of sin.

Contrary to Vivian's reading, the speaker's quandaries now *are* resolved. The evil that men do *is* worse because, in effect, they can do better; man's intellect and reason are reflections of divinity, signs of his higher nature, and they can lead him to the brink of grasping it. As to why God, being merciful,

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also "threatens" with His wrath, the answer is that God *is* merciful, but we access His mercy only through the sacrifice of Christ, who in the Christian view "takes away the sins of the world." This is the gift of grace; the Christian can only accept it. The poem is no cry of despair, as Vivian would have it, but rather an illustration of the path to redemption.

At first the play seems to be suggesting that Vivian's interpretations of Donne, in which he is seen to be playing mind-games and nothing more, are a reflection of her own cold, brilliant, over-intellectualized habit of thought. But as the play progresses, the idea takes root that Donne is a wordsmith, a puzzlemaster, a man with nothing to say to a heart in pain. The poet is seen as confused, scared, overcomplicated, hidden behind his "wit," and, finally, a nihilist altogether—a man who knows his religious faith "doesn't stand up to scrutiny," and so writes "these screwed-up sonnets." The most exemplary person on the medical team that cares for Vivian is a nurse who never reads poetry and is not at all a thinker, but she is good and kind and compassionate to Vivian in her illness; these are the values of the heart that the play puts into counterpoint with the excessive intellectualism of John Donne.

In the last stages of her cancer, greatly weakened and discomforted, Vivian is visited by her old mentor, Professor Ashford. Ashford offers to recite something from Donne, but Vivian, the great Donne scholar, moans in protest, effectively repudiating all that she has done in her life. Instead, Prof. Ashford reads from a children's book about a runaway bunny whose mother promises to find him wherever he goes, and manages to elicit from it the comforting message that God will seek out the soul no matter where it hides. When she takes leave of her old student, now rapidly slipping away from life, Prof. Ashford quotes a line of . . . Shakespeare. Vivian seems soothed. She soon dies, but then ascends—she walks away from the hospital bed, removes her gown, and, naked as the day she entered the world, raises her arms toward a bright light.

Does Vivian achieve beatitude solely by learning, through her pain, about the emotional life? By accepting her need for people? By repudiating the intellect and the poetry of Donne? By hearing the story of the bunny? All these experiences seem to be involved. But the real question is this: why must great art be diminished in order to affirm the contemporary cult of feelings? Why must a false dichotomy between mind and heart substitute for a fuller comprehension of the human soul and the poetry that expresses it? For that matter, why can't a contemporary playwright appreciate that something real actually goes on in religious thought? Vivian's travail is, in fact, somewhat like that of the poet of Holy Sonnet 9—both of them recognize that although reason and intellect are essential to our humanity and our ability to apprehend truth (God wants man to serve Him "wittily, in the tangle of his mind," says Robert Bolt's Thomas More), they are not enough. We need to surrender to the grace of something higher. Donne *could* accompany Vivian through her painful journey and her final transformation. But in Ms. Edson's play the excellences of the past get pared down to the sentiments of Oprah.

And is it true that Donne the brainy gamester has nothing to say to a dying person? Diana Benet, former president of the Donne Society, recommends this:

> All mankind is of one author, and is one volume. When one man dies, one chapter is not torn out of the book, but translated into a better language; and every chapter must be so translated. God employs several translators; some pieces are translated by age, some by sickness, some by war, some by justice. But God's hand is in every translation, and His hand shall bind up all our scattered leaves again for that library where every book shall lie open to one another.

Now doesn't that beat the runaway bunny?

Carol Iannone *writes on literary and cultural topics.*

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Born Toward Dying

Richard John Neuhaus

We are born to die. Not that death is the purpose of our being born, but we are born toward death, and in each of our lives the work of dying is already underway. The work of dying well is, in largest part, the work of living well. Most of us are at ease in discussing what makes for a good life, but we typically become tongue-tied and nervous when the discussion turns to a good death. As children of a culture radically, even religiously, devoted to youth and health, many find it incomprehensible, indeed offensive, that the word "good" should in any way be associated with death. Death, it is thought, is an unmitigated evil, the very antithesis of all that is good.

Death is to be warded off by exercise, by healthy habits, by medical advances. What cannot be halted can be delayed, and what cannot forever be delayed can be denied. But all our progress and all our protest notwithstanding, the mortality rate holds steady at 100 percent.

Death is the most everyday of everyday things. It is not simply that thousands of people die every day, that thousands will die this day, although that too is true. Death is the warp and woof of existence in the ordinary, the quotidian, the way things are. It is the horizon against which we get up in the morning and go to bed at night, and the next morning we awake to find the horizon has drawn closer. From the twelfth-century *Enchiridion Leonis* comes the nighttime prayer of children of all ages: "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray thee Lord my soul to keep; if I should die before I wake, I pray thee Lord my soul to take." Every going to sleep is a little death, a rehearsal for the real thing.

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Such is the generality, the warp and woof of everyday existence with which the wise have learned to live. But then our wisdom is shattered, not by a sudden awareness of the generality but by the singularity of *a* death—by the death of someone we love with a love inseparable from life. Or it is shattered by the imminent prospect of our own dying. With the cultivated complacency of the mass murderer that he was, Josef Stalin observed, "One death is a tragedy; a million deaths is a statistic." The generality is a buffer against both guilt and sorrow. It is death in the singular that shatters all we thought we knew about death. It is death in the singular that turns the problem of death into the catastrophe of death. Thus the lamentation of Dietrich von Hildebrand: "I am filled with disgust and emptiness over the rhythm of everyday life that goes relentlessly on—as though nothing had changed, as though I had not lost my precious beloved!"

It used to be said that the Victorians of the nineteenth century talked incessantly about death but were silent about sex, whereas today we talk incessantly about sex and are silent about death. In 1973, Ernest Becker's *The Denial of Death* contended that Freud had gotten it exactly backwards. It is not true, said Becker, that our fear of death is rooted in our denial of sex, but, rather, that our fear of sex is rooted in our denial of death. Throughout history, and in many cultures, sex and death have been engaged in a *danse macabre*, and not simply at the shadowed margins of erotic fantasy where dwell the likes of the Marquis de Sade.

In sex and death are joined beginning and ending, the generative and the destructive. In today's culture we chatter incessantly about both sex and death. They are subjected to the specialization of experts, of therapists, ethicists, and the like. Sex and death have been "problematized," and problems are to be

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"solved" by sexual technique and the technology of dying. Victorian reticence about sex and our former reticence about death may have mystified both, although the probable intent was simply to put them out of mind. In any event, we have now embarked with a vengeance upon a course of demystification. Now there is nothing we cannot talk about in polite company. It is a great liberation. And a great loss, if in fact both sex and death partake of mystery. Mystery is attended by a fitting reticence.

Death and dying has become a strangely popular topic. "Support groups" for the bereaved crop up all over. How to "cope" with dying is a regular on television talk shows. It no doubt has something to do with the growing number of old people in the population. "So many more people seem to die these days," remarked my elderly aunt as she looked over the obituary columns in the local daily. Obituaries routinely include medical details once thought to be the private business of the family. Every evening without fail, at least in our cities, the television news carries a "sob shot" of relatives who have lost someone in an accident or crime. "And how did you feel when you saw she was dead?" The intrusiveness is shameless, and taboos once broken are hard to put back together again.

Evelyn Waugh's *The Loved One* brilliantly satirized and Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death* brutally savaged the death industry of commercial exploitation. Years later it may be time for a similarly critical look at the psychological death industry that got underway in 1969 when Elizabeth Kübler-Ross set forth her five stages of grieving—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. No doubt many people feel they have been helped by formal and informal therapies for bereavement and, if they feel they have been helped, they probably have been helped in some way that is not unimportant. Just being able to get through the day without cracking up is no little thing. But neither, one may suggest, is it the most important thing. I have listened to people who speak with studied, almost clinical, detail about where they are in their trek through the five stages. Death and bereavement are "processed." There are hundreds of self-help books on how to cope with death in order to get on with life. This essay is not of that genre.

A measure of reticence and silence is in order. There is a time simply to be present to death—whether one's own or that of others—without any felt urgencies about doing something about it or getting over it. The Preacher had it right: "For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die . . . a time to mourn, and a time to dance." The time of mourning should be given its due. One may be permitted to wonder about the wisdom of contemporary funeral rites that hurry to the dancing, displacing sorrow with the determined affirmation of resurrection hope, supplying a ready answer to a question that has not been given time to understand itself. One may even long for the *Dies Irae*, the sequence at the old Requiem Mass. *Dies irae, dies illa / Solvet saeclum in favilla / Teste David cum Sibylla*: "Day of wrath and terror looming / Heaven and earth to ash consuming / Seer's and Psalmist's true foredooming."

The worst thing is not the sorrow or the loss or the heartbreak. Worse is to be encountered by death and not to be changed by the encounter. There are pills we can take to get through the experience, but the danger is that we then do not go through the experience but around it. Traditions of wisdom encourage us to stay with death a while. Among observant Jews, for instance, those closest to the deceased observe shiva for seven days following the death. During shiva one does not work, bathe, put on shoes, engage in intercourse, read Torah, or have his hair cut. The mourners are to behave as though they themselves had died. The first response to death is to give inconsolable grief its due. Such grief is assimilated during the seven days of shiva, and then tempered by a month of more moderate mourning. After a year all mourning is set aside, except for the praying of kaddish, the prayer for the dead, on the anniversary of the death.

In *The Blood of the Lamb*, Peter de Vries calls us to "the recognition of how long, how very long, is the mourners' bench upon which we sit, arms linked in undeluded friendship—all of us, brief links ourselves, in the eternal pity." From the pity we may hope that wisdom has been distilled, a wisdom from which we can benefit when we take our place on the mourners' bench. Philosophy means the love of wisdom, and so some may look to philosophers in their time of loss and aloneness. George Santayana wrote, "A good way of testing the caliber of a philosophy is to ask what it thinks of death." What does it tell us that modern philosophy has had relatively little to say about death? Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, "What can be said at all can be said clearly; and whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent." There is undoubtedly wisdom in such reticence that stands in refreshing contrast to a popular culture sated by therapeutic chatter. But those who sit, arms linked in undeluded friendship, cannot help but ask and wonder.

All philosophy begins in wonder, said the ancients. With exceptions, contemporary philosophy stops at wonder. We are told: don't ask, don't wonder, about

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what you cannot know for sure. But the most important things of everyday life we cannot know for sure. We cannot *know* them beyond all possibility of their turning out to be false. We order our loves and loyalties, we invest our years with meaning and our death with hope, not knowing for sure, beyond all reasonable doubt, whether we might not have gotten it wrong. What we need is a philosophy that enables us to speak truly, if not clearly, a wisdom that does not eliminate but comprehends our doubt.

A long time ago, when I was a young pastor in a very black and very poor inner-city parish that could not pay a salary, I worked part-time as chaplain at Kings County Hospital in Brooklyn. With more than three thousand beds, Kings County boasted then of being the largest medical center in the world. It seems primitive now, but thirty-five years ago not much of a fuss was made about those who were beyond reasonable hope of recovery. They were almost all poor people, and this was before Medicare or Medicaid, so it was, as we used to say, a charity hospital. They were sedated, and food was brought for those who could eat. The dying, male and female, had their beds lined up side by side in a huge ward, fifty to a hundred of them at any given time. On hot summer days and without air-conditioning, they would fitfully toss off sheets and undergarments. The scene of naked and half-naked bodies groaning and writhing was reminiscent of Dante's *Purgatorio.*

Hardly a twenty-four-hour stint would go by without my accompanying two or three or more people to their death. One such death is indelibly printed upon my memory. His name was Albert, a man of about seventy and (I don't know why it sticks in my mind) completely bald. That hot summer morning I had prayed with him and read the Twenty-third Psalm. Toward evening, I went up again to the death ward—for so everybody called it—to see him again. Clearly the end was near. Although he had been given a sedative, he was entirely lucid. I put my left arm around his shoulder and together, face almost touching face, we prayed the Our Father. Then Albert's eyes opened wider, as though he had seen something in my expression. "Oh," he said, "Oh, don't be afraid." His body sagged back and he was dead. Stunned, I realized that, while I thought I was ministering to him, his last moment of life was expended in ministering to me.

There is another death that will not leave me. Charlie Williams was a deacon of St. John the Evangelist in Brooklyn. (We sometimes called the parish St. John the Mundane in order to distinguish it from St. John the Divine, the Episcopal cathedral up on Morningside Heights.) Charlie was an ever ebullient and sustaining presence through rough times. In the face of every difficulty, he had no doubt but that "Jesus going to see us through." Then something went bad in his chest, and the doctors made medically erudite noises to cover their ignorance. I held his hand as he died a painful death at age forty-three. Through the blood that bubbled up from his hemorrhaging lungs he formed his last word—very quietly, not complaining but deeply puzzled, he looked up at me and said, "Why?"

Between Albert's calm assurance and Charlie's puzzlement, who is to say which is the Christian way to die? I have been with others who screamed defiance, and some who screamed with pain, and many who just went to sleep. Typically today the patient is heavily sedated and plugged into sundry machines. One only knows that death has come when the beeping lines on the monitors go flat or the attending physician nods his head in acknowledgment of medicine's defeat. It used to be that we accompanied sisters and brothers to their final encounter. Now we mostly sit by and wait. The last moment that we are really with them, and they with us, is often hours or even many days before they die. But medical technology notwithstanding, for each one of them, for each one of us, at some point "it" happens.

It has often been said that each death is unique, that each of us must die our own death. Enthusiasts such as Walt Whitman gild the inevitable. "Nothing can happen more beautiful than death," he wrote in *Leaves of Grass.* In "Song of Myself" he trumpets: "Has anyone supposed it lucky to be born? / I hasten to inform him or her, it is just as lucky to die, and I know it." Good for him. "Why fear death?" asked Charles Frohman as he went down with the sinking *Lusitania.* "Death is only a beautiful adventure." Fare thee well, Mr. Frohman. If each life is unique, and it is, then it would seem to follow that each death is unique. I will not dispute the logic of that. And there is no doubt an element of adventure in moving into the unknown. But in my own experience of dying, it struck me as so very commonplace, even trite, that this life should end this way. Perhaps I should explain.

Several lawyers have told me that it would make a terrific malpractice suit. All I would have to do is make a deposition and then answer a few questions in court, if it ever came to trial, which it probably wouldn't since the insurance companies would be eager to settle. It would be, I was assured, a very big settlement. The statute of limitations has not run out as of this writing. But I will not sue, mainly because it would somehow sully my gratitude for being returned from the jaws of death. Gratitude is too pre-

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cious and too fragile to keep company with what looks suspiciously like revenge.

The stomach pains and intestinal cramps had been coming on for almost a year. My regular physician, a Park Avenue doctor of excellent reputation, had told me long ago how pleased he was with the new techniques for colonoscopy. It meant, he said, that none of his patients need die of colon cancer. His partner, the specialist in these matters, did one colonoscopy and, some weeks later, another. After each mildly painful probing up through the intestines, he was glad to tell me that there was nothing there. Then, on Sunday afternoon, January 10, 1993, about five o'clock, after four days of intense discomfort in which there was yet another probe and yet another x-ray, I was at home suddenly doubled over on the floor with nausea and pain. The sensation was of my stomach exploding.

My friend George Weigel was visiting and he phoned the doctor's office, but the doctor was on vacation. The doctor covering for him listened to the symptoms and prescribed a powerful laxative. (I said that this story would smack of the commonplace.) Much later, other doctors said that the prescription might, more than possibly, have been fatal. They said they never heard of several colonoscopies not detecting a tumor, and shook their heads over a physician who would prescribe a laxative after being apprised of symptoms indicating something much more seriously wrong.

Weigel had the presence of mind to bundle me off—pushing, pulling, half-carrying me—to the nearest emergency room, which, fortunately, was only a block from the house. The place was crowded. I strongly recommend always having with you an aggressive friend or two when you go to a hospital and are really sick. A large and imperiously indifferent woman at the desk was not about to let anyone jump the line of waiting cases, relenting only when Weigel gave signs that he was not averse to the use of physical violence. She then sat me down to answer a long list of questions about symptoms and medical insurance, which I tried to answer until I fell off the chair in a faint, at which point she surmised she had an emergency on her hands. The experience so far did not instill confidence in the care I was likely to receive.

Very soon, however, I was flat on my back on a gurney, surrounded by tubes, machines, and technicians exhibiting their practiced display of frenetic precision, just like on television. The hospital's chief surgeon, who happened to be on duty that night, ordered an x-ray that showed a large tumor in the colon and declared there was no time to lose. I was wheeled at great speed down the halls for an elevator to the operating room, only to discover the elevators were out of order. By then I had been sedated and was feeling no pain. In fact, I was somewhat giddy and recall trying to make a joke about the contrast between the high-tech medicine and the broken-down elevators. A guard showed up who said he knew how to get the number six elevator working, and then I was looking up at the white water-stained ceiling of the operating room, and then there was someone putting a mask over my face and telling me to breathe deeply, and then there was "Now I lay me down to sleep . . . ," and then there was the next morning.

The operation took several hours and was an unspeakable mess. The tumor had expanded to rupture the intestine; blood, fecal matter, and guts all over the place. My stomach was sliced open from the rib cage down to the pubic area, then another slice five inches to the left from the navel for a temporary colostomy. I've noticed that in such cases the doctors always seem to say that the tumor was "as big as a grapefruit," but my surgeon insists the blackish gray glob was the size of "a big apple." After they had sewed me up, the hemorrhaging began, they knew not from where. Blood pressure collapsed and other vital signs began to fade. What to do? The surgeon advised my friend to call the immediate family and let them know I would likely not make it through the night. The doctors debated. To open me up all over again might kill me. On the other hand, if they didn't find and stop the hemorrhaging I was surely dead.

Of course they went in again. The source of the effusion of blood was the spleen, "nicked," as the surgeon said, in the ghastliness of the first surgery. Given the circumstances, I'm surprised that parts more vital were not nicked. The spleen removed and the blood flow stanched, they sewed me up again and waited to see if I would live. The particulars of that night, of course, I was told after the event. "It was an interesting case," one doctor opined in a friendly manner. "It was as though you had been hit twice by a Mack truck going sixty miles an hour. I didn't think you'd survive."

My first clear memory is of the next morning, I don't know what time. I am surrounded by doctors and technicians talking in a worried tone about why I am not coming to. I heard everything that was said and desperately wanted to respond, but I was locked into absolute immobility, incapable of moving an eyelash or twitching a toe. The sensation was that of being encased in marble; pink marble, I thought, such as is used for gravestones. The surgeon repeatedly urged me to move my thumb, but it was impos-

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sible. Then I heard, "The Cardinal is here." It was my bishop, John Cardinal O'Connor. He spoke directly into my right ear, repeatedly calling my name. Then, "Richard, wriggle your nose." It was a plea and a command, and I wanted to do it more urgently than anything I have ever wanted to do in my life. The trying, the sheer exercise of will to wriggle my nose, seemed to go on and on, and then I felt a twinge, no more than a fraction of a millimeter, and the Cardinal said, "He did it! He did it!" "I didn't see anything," said the surgeon. So I tried again, and I did it again, and everybody saw it, and the Cardinal and the doctors and the technicians all began to exclaim what a wonderful thing it was, as though one had risen from the dead.

The days in the intensive care unit was an experience familiar to anyone who has ever been there. I had never been there before, except to visit others, and that is nothing like being there. I was struck by my disposition of utter passivity. There was absolutely nothing I could do or wanted to do, except to lie there and let them do whatever they do in such a place. Indifferent to time, I neither knew nor cared whether it was night or day. I recall counting sixteen different tubes and other things plugged into my body before I stopped counting. From time to time, it seemed several times an hour but surely could not have been, a strange young woman with a brown wool hat and heavy gold necklace would come by and whisper, "I want blood." She stuck in a needle and took blood, smiling mysteriously all the time. She could have said she wanted to cut off my right leg and I would probably have raised no objection. So busy was I with just being there, with one thought that was my one and every thought: "I almost died."

Astonishment and passivity were strangely mixed. I confess to having thought of myself as a person very much in charge. Friends, meaning, I trust, no unkindness, had sometimes described me as a control freak. Now there was nothing to be done, nothing that I could do, except be there. Here comes a most curious part of the story, and readers may make of it what they will. Much has been written on "near death" experiences. I had always been skeptical of such tales. I am much less so now. I am inclined to think of it as a "near life" experience, and it happened this way.

It was a couple of days after leaving intensive care, and it was night. I could hear patients in adjoining rooms moaning and mumbling and occasionally calling out; the surrounding medical machines were pumping and sucking and bleeping as usual. Then, all of a sudden, I was jerked into an utterly lucid state of awareness. I was sitting up in the bed staring intently into the darkness, although in fact I knew my body was lying flat. What I was staring at was a color like blue and purple, and vaguely in the form of hanging drapery. By the drapery were two "presences." I saw them and yet did not see them, and I cannot explain that. But they were there, and I knew that I was not tied to the bed. I was able and prepared to get up and go somewhere. And then the presences—one or both of them, I do not know—spoke. This I heard clearly. Not in an ordinary way, for I cannot remember anything about the voice. But the message was beyond mistaking: "Everything is ready now."

That was it. They waited for a while, maybe for a minute. Whether they were waiting for a response or just waiting to see whether I had received the message, I don't know. "Everything is ready now." It was not in the form of a command, nor was it an invitation to do anything. They were just letting me know. Then they were gone, and I was again flat on my back with my mind racing wildly. I had an iron resolve to determine right then and there what had happened. Had I been dreaming? In no way. I was then and was now as lucid and wide awake as I had ever been in my life.

Tell me that I was dreaming and you might as well tell me that I was dreaming that I wrote the sentence before this one. Testing my awareness, I pinched myself hard, and ran through the multiplication tables, and recalled the birth dates of my seven brothers and sisters, and my wits were vibrantly about me. The whole thing had lasted three or four minutes, maybe less. I resolved at that moment that I would never, never let anything dissuade me from the reality of what had happened. Knowing myself, I expected I would later be inclined to doubt it. It was an experience as real, as powerfully confirmed by the senses, as anything I have ever known. That was some seven years ago. Since then I have not had a moment in which I was seriously tempted to think it did not happen. It happened—as surely, as simply, as undeniably as it happened that I tied my shoelaces this morning. I could as well deny the one as deny the other, and were I to deny either I would surely be mad.

"Everything is ready now." I would be thinking about that incessantly during the months of convalescence. My theological mind would immediately go to work on it. They were angels, of course. *Angelos* simply means "messenger." There were no white robes or wings or anything of that sort. As I said, I did not see them in any ordinary sense. But there was a message; therefore there were messengers. Clearly, the message was that I could go somewhere with

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them. Not that I must go or should go, but simply that they were ready if I was. Go where? To God, or so it seemed. I understood that they were ready to get me ready to see God. It was obvious enough to me that I was not prepared, in my present physical and spiritual condition, for the beatific vision, for seeing God face to face. They were ready to get me ready. This comports with the doctrine of purgatory, that there is a process of purging and preparation to get us ready to meet God. I should say that their presence was entirely friendly. There was nothing sweet or cloying, and there was no urgency about it. It was as though they just wanted to let me know. The decision was mine as to when or whether I would take them up on the offer.

There is this about being really sick, you get an enormous amount of attention. I cannot say that I did not enjoy it. In the pain and the nausea and the boredom without end, there were times when I was content to lie back and enjoy the attention. It was a kind of compensation. Over these days there were hundreds of cards and letters and phone calls and, later, brief visits—the last by people who sometimes betrayed the hope of having a final word with what they took to be their dying friend. Some of those who checked in I had not seen in years. Nor have I seen them since, so busy are we with our several busynesses. Sickness is an enforced pause for the counting up of our friends, and being grateful.

In all the cards and letters assuring me of prayer, and almost all did offer such assurance, there were notable differences. Catholics say they are "storming the gates of heaven" on your behalf, and have arranged to have Masses said. Evangelical Protestants are "lifting you up before the throne." Mainline Protestants, Jews, and the unaffiliated let it go with a simple "I am praying for you," or "You are in my prayers." One gets the impression that Catholics and evangelicals are more aggressive on the prayer front.

Then there were longer letters laying out the case for my getting better. A friend who is a constitutional scholar at an Ivy League university wrote a virtual lawyer's brief summing up the reasons for dying and the reasons for living, and came down strongly on the side of my living. It was very odd, because after that there were a number of similar letters, all arguing that I should stay around for a while and assuming that I was undecided about that. I was undecided. This struck me as strange: at the time of crisis and in the months of recovery following, I was never once afraid. I don't claim it as a virtue; it was simply the fact. It had less to do with courage than with indifference. Maybe this is "holy indifference," what the spiritual manuals describe as "a quality in a person's love for God above all that excludes preferences for any person, object, or condition of life." Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, and Ignatius Loyola all write at length about such holy indifference. All I know is that I was surprisingly indifferent to whether I would live or die. It probably had less to do with holiness than with my knowing that there was nothing I could do about it one way or the other.

On the other hand, there was the message: "Everything is ready now." As though the decision were mine, to stay or to go. A friend who had written with his son the story of his son's several years of waging a heroic battle against a horrific series of cancers sent me their book, inscribed with the admonition "to fight relentlessly for life." It was very kind, but I was not at all disposed to fight. More to the point were those letters calmly laying out the reasons why it would be better for others, if not for me, were I to live rather than to die. Over the slow weeks and slower months of recovery, I gradually came to agree. But still very tentatively.

When I was recuperating at home and could take phone calls, those calls became a staple of everyday existence. There were dozens of calls daily; closer friends called every day. Somebody was always on call-waiting. I enjoyed it shamelessly. Although I was often too tired to talk, when I had the energy I related in detail, over and over again, every minuscule change in my condition. With a credible display of intense interest, people listened to the problems with colostomy bags and the latest wrinkle in controlling the nausea that came with chemotherapy. And always in my talking, I was on the edge of tears. I, who had seldom cried in my adult life, was regularly, and without embarrassment, blubbering. Not in sadness. Not at all. But in a kind of amazement that this had happened to me, and maybe I was going to die and maybe I was going to live, and it was all quite out of my control. That was it, I think: I was not in charge, and it was both strange and very good not to be in charge.

Tentatively, I say, I began to think that I might live. It was not a particularly joyful prospect. Everything was shrouded by the thought of death, that I had almost died, that I may still die, that everyone and everything is dying. As much as I was grateful for all the calls and letters, I harbored a secret resentment. These friends who said they were thinking about me and praying for me all the time, I knew they also went shopping and visited their children and tended to their businesses, and there were long times when they were not thinking about me at all. More important, they were forgetting the primordial, overwhelming, indomitable fact: we are dying! Why weren't they

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as crushingly impressed by that fact as I was?

After a month or so, I could, with assistance, walk around the block. Shuffle is the more accurate term, irrationally fearing with every step that my stomach would rip open again. I have lived in New York almost forty years and have always been a fierce chauvinist about the place. When you're tired of London, you're tired of life, said Dr. Johnson. I had always thought that about New York, where there is more terror and tenderness per square foot than any place in the world. I embraced all the clichés about the place, the palpable vitality of its streets, the electricity in the air, and so forth and so on. Shuffling around the block and then, later, around several blocks, I was tired of it. Death was everywhere. The children at the playground at 19th Street and Second Avenue I saw as corpses covered with putrefying skin. The bright young model prancing up Park Avenue with her portfolio under her arm and dreaming of the success she is to be, doesn't she know she's going to die, that she's already dying? I wanted to cry out to everybody and everything, "Don't you know what's happening?" But I didn't. Let them be in their innocence and ignorance. It didn't matter. Nothing mattered.

Surprising to me, and to others, I did what had to be done with my work. I read manuscripts, wrote my columns, made editorial decisions, but all listlessly. It didn't really matter. After some time, I could shuffle the few blocks to the church and say Mass. At the altar, I cried a lot, and hoped the people didn't notice. To think that I'm really here after all, I thought, at the altar, at the *axis mundi*, the center of life. And of death. I would be helped back to the house, and days beyond numbering I would simply lie on the sofa looking out at the back yard. That birch tree, which every winter looked as dead as dead could be, was budding again. Would I be here to see it in full leaf, to see its leaves fall in the autumn? Never mind. It doesn't matter.

When I was a young man a parishioner told me, "Do all your praying before you get really sick. When you're sick you can't really pray." She was right, at least in largest part. Being really sick—vomiting, and worrying about what will show up on the next blood test, and trying to ignore the pain at three o'clock in the morning—is a full-time job. At best, you want to recede into relatively painless passivity, and listen to your older sister reading Willa Cather, as my sister read to me. During those long nights, *My Antonia*, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, *Shadows on the Rock*, and at those times I could have wished it to go on and on. Not that it mattered, but it was ever so pleasant being ever so pampered.

People are different around the very sick, especially when they think they may be dying. In the hospital, bishops came to visit and knelt by my bedside, asking for a blessing. A Jewish doctor, professing himself an atheist, asked for my prayers with embarrassed urgency. His wife had cancer, he explained, "And you know about that now." Call it primitive instinct or spiritual insight, but there is an aura about the sick and dying. They have crossed a line into a precinct others do not know. It is the aura of redemptive suffering, of suffering "offered up" on behalf of others, because there is nothing else to be done with it and you have to do something with it. The point is obvious but it impressed me nonetheless: when you are really sick it is impossible to imagine what it is like to be really well; and when you are well it is almost impossible to remember what it was like to be really sick. They are different precincts.

I had lost nearly fifty pounds and was greatly weakened. There was still another major surgery to come, to reverse the colostomy. You don't want to know the details. It was not the most dangerous surgery, but it was the third Mack truck, and for a long time afterward I barely had strength to lift my hand. Then, step by almost imperceptible step, I was recovering and dared to hope that I would be well again, that I would stride down the street again, that I would take on new projects again. Very little things stand out like luminous signposts. The first time I was able to take a shower by myself. It was dying and rising again in baptismal flood. When one day I was sent home from the hospital after another round of tests, I was told that, if I did not urinate by five o'clock, I should come back to the emergency room and someone would put the catheter back in. My heart sank. It was quite irrational, but going back to the emergency room would have been like recapitulating the entire ordeal of these last several months. I could not endure the thought. When at four o'clock I peed a strong triumphant pee, my heart was lifted on high, and with tears of gratitude I began to sing with feeble voice a Te Deum. I thought, "I am going to get better." And I allowed myself, ever so tentatively, to be glad.

That was seven years ago. I feel very well now. They tell me I might be around for another twenty years or so. Medical science, perhaps arbitrarily, says five years is the point of complete recovery when you are reassigned to your age slot on the actuarial chart. But just to be safe, the tests continue on a regular basis. Next Monday we get the latest report on the CEA (Carcinoembryonic Antigen), the blood indicator of cancerous activity, although the doctor says the test is really not necessary. But I think I am

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well now. It took a long time after the surgeries, almost two years, before the day came when I suddenly realized that the controlling thought that day had not been the thought of death. And now, in writing this little essay, it all comes back. I remember where I have been, and where I will be again, and where we will all be.

There is nothing that remarkable in my story, except that we are all unique in our living and dying. Early on in my illness a friend gave me John Donne's wondrous *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions*. The *Devotions* were written a year after Donne had almost died, and then lingered for months by death's door. He writes, "Though I may have seniors, others may be elder than I, yet I have proceeded apace in a good university, and gone a great way in a little time, by the furtherance of a vehement fever." So I too have been to a good university, and what I have learned, what I have learned most importantly, is that, in living and in dying, everything is ready now. FT

The Real Presence

Present me with something real,
and nothing short of breath,
that inspiration may succeed,
and spirit conquer death:
something I might split in two
while always keeping one,
lying not beyond my touch,
nor doing would be done.

Patrick Miller

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Capitalism and the Suicide of Culture

Brian C. Anderson

Not long before he died, the political philosopher Isaiah Berlin somberly summed up his, and our, age: "I have lived through most of the twentieth century without, I must add, suffering personal hardship. I remember it only as the most terrible century in Western history." What made it so horrific is politics or, more precisely, the secular religions of National Socialism and communism that violently sought to transfigure the bourgeois economic and political condition of modern man. The exact number of people killed by these dark political adventures is lost to time, though surely it exceeds 125 million.

The secular religions are now gone, leaving behind only loss and ruin. Communism, as an ongoing political experiment, expired with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989; National Socialism didn't survive its crushing military defeat during World War II. As the twenty-first century dawns, it is difficult to imagine a serious ideological challenger to what communism and National Socialism wanted to destroy: prosaic bourgeois liberal democracy—what social theorist Michael Novak calls democratic capitalism.

Despite the fall of the political messianisms, however, the future of democratic capitalism is by no means unclouded. Perhaps this is as it should be, since all things merely human are flawed. The hubris of the secular religions was to think that they had solved "the political problem." Properly understood, democratic capitalism makes no such claims. It has been a virtue of the richest current of liberal democratic thought, from James Madison and Alexis de Tocqueville to Irving Kristol and Pierre Manent, to explore bourgeois society's inherent limitations and failings without losing sight of its basic decency and relative justness. Three important recent books allow us to confirm the relevance of that anti-utopian tradition and gain a better understanding of what troubles democratic capitalism today.

François Furet's *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century* (University of Chicago Press) provides striking insights into the political tensions of democratic capitalism. While most nations have awakened to the economic merits of the free market, John Gray's *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (New Press) proclaims the post-Marxist era of the new global economy a human disaster. He's mostly wrong, but enthusiasts of unleashed markets would be foolish simply to ignore the dissatisfactions he gives voice to. And Francis Fukuyama's ambitious *The Great Disruption: Human Nature and the Reconstitution of Social Order* (Free Press), which seeks to explain the social chaos that has plagued the economically advanced democracies for several decades, helps illumine—though not in a way the author intends—the biggest danger to democratic capitalism: the growing alliance between the free-market economy and a culture of moral libertinism. Politics, economics, culture: in each sphere, democratic capitalism faces deep challenges.

At the time of his death in 1997, François Furet was France's foremost historian and the world's preeminent authority on the French Revolution. Though once a Marxist himself, Furet broke with the Marxist view of the French Revolution—long dominant in French historiography—which saw it as an economically determined bourgeois warm-up for the Russian Revolution of October 1917. In the Marxian optic, 1789 was the inevitable result of a rising bourgeoisie overthrowing the ancien régime and the agricultural society tied to it. Furet rejected the notion of historical inevitability and gave human political actions a central explanatory role. In a

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Tocquevillian register of melancholic liberalism, he also claimed that the revolution released utopian hopes for a humanity reconciled with itself and in control of its destiny that neither liberal democracy nor any other political regime, including socialism, could ever satisfactorily fulfill.

The Passing of an Illusion, which appeared in France in 1995 and quickly became a controversial best-seller across Europe, shifts the focus to the twentieth century and to the rise and decline of the Communist idea, the inheritor of those profound but—when directed into politics—destructive longings. Disabused, attentive to the complex interactions of "ideas, intentions, and circumstances" that give meaning to history, Furet's final testament is written on the far side of the revolutionary passions of the epoch. It serves as a kind of warning about expecting too much from politics.

Communism's seductive appeal, Furet argues, came in considerable part from coupling the inherently incompatible ideas of human volition and the science of history. The Russian Bolsheviks showed the true capacity of man's revolutionary will, which, in the most backward nation of Europe, promised the achievement of human liberation first announced by the French Revolution. To this "cult of volition," Furet explains, "Lenin would add the certainties of science, drawn from Marx's *Capital*." History has a predetermined outcome, and thanks to Marxist "science," we know exactly what it is, the revolutionaries claimed. Knowledge would transform Proletarian man into the Lord of Time, ushering in the classless society.

It was never clear how a science of historical inevitability could be reconciled with the allegedly Promethean will that forged the Russian Revolution, but no matter. Isaiah Berlin describes the emotional lure: "There is a curious human feeling that if the stars in their courses are fighting for you, so that your cause will triumph, then you should sacrifice yourself in order to shorten the process, to bring the birth pangs of the new order nearer." Will and science: "By combining these two supremely modern elixirs with their contempt for logic," Furet stringently notes, "the revolutionaries of 1917 had finally concocted a brew sufficiently potent to inebriate militants for generations to come."

However intoxicating communism's blend of revolutionary will and pseudo-science, it inebriated as many as it did because it both grew out of and exploited a two-fold political weakness of the bourgeois regime. The first weakness: liberal democracy set loose an egalitarian spirit that it can never fully tame. The notion of the universality and equality of man, which liberal democracy claims as its foundation, easily becomes subject to egalitarian overbidding. Equality constantly finds itself undermined by the freedoms the liberal order secures. The liberty to pursue wealth, to seek to better one's condition, to create, to strive for power or achievement—all these freedoms unceasingly generate inequality, since not all people are equally gifted, equally nurtured, equally hardworking, equally lucky. Equality works in democratic capitalist societies like an imaginary horizon, forever retreating as one approaches it.

Communism professed to fulfill the democratic promise of equality. Real liberty could only be the achievement of a more equal world, a world, that is, without the bourgeoisie. And if what the Communists derisively called the "formal" liberties of expression and political representation had to go in order to establish the true freedom of a classless society, well, so be it. Thus was set in motion, Furet ruefully observes, the "egalitarian apocalypse."

The second weakness is more complex, though its consequences are increasingly evident: liberal democracy's moral indeterminacy. The "bourgeois city," as Furet terms it, is morally indeterminate because, basing itself on the sovereign individual, it constituted itself as a rebellion against, or at least a downplaying of, any extrahuman or ontological dimension that might provide moral direction to life. For all the inestimable benefits of the bourgeois city—its three-fold liberation, in Michael Novak's formulation, from tyranny, from the oppression of conscience, and from the grinding material poverty of the premodern world—its deliverance from the past has come at a price.

As the "self" moves to the center of the bourgeois world, Furet suggests, existential questions—what is man? what is the meaning of life?—become difficult to answer. Communism, usurping the role of religion in checking the individualizing excesses of democratic modernity, falsely promised to resolve such pressing existential questions, to provide a political articulation—monstrously perverse, as it turned out—of human ends.

The two political weaknesses of the bourgeois order, Furet adds, have a psychological corollary: self-doubt and self-hatred. The bourgeois man finds himself unsettled by a guilty conscience and spiritual dissatisfaction. "Self-doubt," Furet writes, "has led to a characteristic of modern democracy probably unique in universal history, the infinite capacity to produce offspring who detest the social and political regime into which they were born—hating the very air they breathe, though they cannot survive without it and have known no other." Hatred of the bour-

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geoisie, on the right and the left, is a tale as old as bourgeois modernity itself, of course, but it is jarring to realize how much ire has come not from aristocratic revenants or fiery proles, but from the cerebral sons of bourgeois fathers. Historian Perry Anderson points out that most of the leading Marxist thinkers originally came from bourgeois money: Theodore Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Friedrich Engels, Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg, Herbert Marcuse, even Marx himself—all had fathers who were bankers, bureaucrats, lawyers, manufacturers, or merchants.

The end of World War I—a bourgeois war motivated by bourgeois concerns and supported by the bourgeois class—left middle-class Europe exhausted. Into the breach stepped the Soviet Union, the antibourgeois society with all the answers. In the interwar years, the liberal democratic societies seemed powerless to control their fate while the Soviet Union's "five year plans," constructing the socialist future, appeared the very model of human rationality. But as credible reports of purges, political terror, and starvation began to leak from Stalin's totalitarian netherworld during the 1930s, doubts about the Communist system began to arise.

The chaotic aftermath of the war also spurred the rise of fascism, a second and rival critique of bourgeois modernity. Where communism embraced the universal ideals of 1789, fascism drew its revolutionary force from the nation and—with its darkest star, National Socialism—from racial ideology, making it what Furet calls the "pathology of the particular." Although professed mortal enemies, communism and fascism shared many affinities, including a loathing of the bourgeoisie, which is our concern here.

Despite the failures of communism and fascism, the political weaknesses of the bourgeois democracies—their susceptibility to egalitarian overbidding and their moral indeterminacy—are with us still. Nor are we free from hatred of the bourgeoisie; it remains virulent in both high and popular culture. The liberal democratic regime, Furet observes, by its very nature "creates the need for a world beyond the bourgeoisie and beyond Capital, a world in which a genuine human community can flourish"—a need, his book persuasively shows, that will never be met. With the fall of communism, "The idea of *another* society has become almost impossible to conceive of, and no one in the world today is offering any advice on the subject or even trying to formulate a new concept." "Here we are," Furet concludes, "condemned to live in the world as it is."

Is this strange antinomy of the human political condition—between the utopian impulse and prosaic reality—sustainable? Though communism and fascism have exited the stage of history, one should resist the temptation to conclude that the history of politics culminates in the bourgeois regime. New political monsters may yet arise from the unstable and ultimately dissatisfying bourgeois world. More likely, liberal democratic societies will continue their plunge into a generalized moral nihilism subversive of bourgeois order—a concern I will return to later. The task of political thought is to guard against these threats, whatever shape they might take, through what Furet terms "the sad analysis of reality."

If the political future of democratic capitalism remains uncertain, requiring both vigilance and reconciliation to this-worldly imperfections, what about its economic prospect? Though communism now rests in history's dustbin, anticapitalism is not without influential adherents, as evidenced by British political theorist John Gray. Gray is not of the traditional left. But having moved from Margaret Thatcher's camp in the 1980s to become a fierce critic of Thatcher's legacy during the 1990s, he is certainly no longer the free-market conservative he once was. His recent book *False Dawn* is a blistering assault on the global capitalism of competitive free markets, fast-moving entrepreneurs, and volatile stock exchanges.

Gray brusquely dismisses the assumption that global capitalism will spread wealth across the planet. Inverting Montesquieu's dictum that "commerce . . . polishes and softens barbarian ways," Gray believes that capitalism is leading inexorably to a new late-modern barbarism. Indeed, Gray argues, the project of creating a world market is as utopian as Soviet communism—both are Enlightenment ideologies, he stresses, wedded to the cult of reason and blind to history—and threatens "to rival it in the suffering that it inflicts."

For Gray, the project for a world market is utopian because it seeks to transplant a U.S.-forged "unfettered" capitalism, characterized by flexible labor markets, low taxes, spirited competition, and relatively restrained welfare benefits, to cultures with radically different, "embedded" markets in which man's desire to barter and trade is constrained. The transplant will never take, since unfettered markets are humanly unsatisfying; but global capitalism's "gale of creative destruction"—Gray borrows the language, though not the sobriety, of economist Joseph Schumpeter—will erode social cohesion by destroying settled ways of life, ignite fundamentalist movements that will struggle to restore order by force, and

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lead rival powers to exploit natural resources ruthlessly until the earth is left cracked and barren. The world will face the "return of history," Gray solemnly warns, "with its familiar intractable conflicts, tragic choices, and ruined illusions."

Gray paints global capitalism in lurid colors. "Already it has resulted," he writes, "in over a hundred million peasants becoming migrant laborers in China, the exclusion from work and participation in society of tens of millions in the advanced societies, a condition of near-anarchy and rule by organized crime in parts of the post-Communist world, and further devastation of the environment." In the U.S., where the market is most free and its unyielding logic most visible, the technological innovation and cutthroat competition that creative destruction lets loose has "proletarianized" the middle classes by eliminating stable careers and suppressing income growth, undermined the family, bred resentment over fast-rising inequality, and pushed innumerable uprooted and alienated individuals into criminality. The dismal realities of the U.S. economy, he predicts, will soon consume the world. Supporting his contention, Gray interprets the crisis of Asian capitalism as a harbinger of a "fast developing crisis of global capitalism," a sign that global free markets have become ungovernable.

Gray sees no truly viable political response to global capitalism. He hopes for what I would call a "market pluralism," encouraging various ways of articulating markets within different cultural and political forms. But his hope burns dimly since he sees no world power that will put a brake on the market. The U.S., which has the power, is the global market's chief sponsor. Socialism is dead, Gray acknowledges, and for good reason: "The legacy of socialist central planning has been ruinous." But Gray thinks that his preferred social democracy, too, has gone into "final retreat," unable to resist the capitalist storm. Global markets, obeying a "New Gresham's Law" in which bad forms of capitalism drive out good, punish governments that borrow too much money or boost taxes to achieve full employment. A "race to the bottom" ensues, with governments stripping away social protections in order to remain economically competitive and firms relocating to the global backwater with the cheapest labor costs.

As for the neoconservative belief that markets can be tied to traditional morality, Gray is contemptuous. The free market, he says, by celebrating individual choice above all other goods, necessarily erodes traditional forms of life. Global capitalism will proceed without a humanly appealing economic and political alternative until it sets itself, and the world, aflame.

Most of *False Dawn*'s description of contemporary capitalism, it is easy to show, is wildly exaggerated. Gray overestimates the degree of the historical ascendancy of American-style capitalism and the destructive effects of economic globalization. Market pluralism is, in fact, a fairly accurate way of describing the global economy, and is likely to remain so. To the "unfettered" capitalism of the U.S.—itself a caricature, since the U.S. economy is regulated heavily—we can contrast Japanese capitalism, which, despite the turmoil that has roiled the Asian markets in the last year, still features long-term employment and tight relations between banks and other firms; the German social-market model, with generous welfare benefits, powerful trade unions, and high taxes; and the touted "Third Way" of Tony Blair's Labor Party in England. One needn't stake a claim on the merits of any particular capitalism to grasp the reality of market pluralism.

Each kind of capitalism entails unavoidable tradeoffs. German worker protections, for example, come at a cost: negative job growth over the past five years and high unemployment. The U.S.'s freer market has led to booming job growth and low unemployment but greater disparities in wealth. Economic globalization, *pace* Gray, hasn't made these difficult social choices irrelevant. It does, however, punish exceedingly foolish economic programs, like President François Mitterrand's 1981 nationalization of large swaths of the French private sector, which sent $3 billion a day in capital flooding from the country until his government was forced to change course. We may be witnessing the "final retreat" of extreme forms of social democracy, though even that I doubt, since the pull of egalitarianism will always be powerful in bourgeois societies. But, contrary to Gray, more moderate versions remain viable, albeit at the cost of low job growth and high taxes. There is no wide-ranging "race to the bottom."

Only on two counts does Gray's analysis deserve deeper scrutiny. First, there is capitalism's tendency to erode stable careers. The U.S., where the project to establish the global market originated, is the best place, Gray feels, to measure the insecurity creative destruction brings with it. The rest of the world will soon feel it. "In their ever greater dependency on increasingly uncertain jobs," Gray contends, "the American middle classes resemble the classic proletariat of nineteenth-century Europe." Today, he holds, the prospect of a career is becoming obsolete.

That overstates the situation. Many people still have long-term, even lifetime, careers. The U.S. employment turnover rate has shifted in the direc-

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tion of mobility, but more from individuals willingly changing jobs (or even careers) than from being fired or laid off. Nevertheless, beneath Gray's inflammatory rhetoric lies a truth. For much of the post-World War II period, technological changes came relatively slowly. Industry in the developed world grew used to fixed ways of doing things. Now, as competition from an increasingly international economy liberates ever more creativity and technological innovation, the insecurity of employees will continue to grow as whole industries become redundant and are replaced with new industries, perhaps unimagined a short time before. How much call is there, in the year 2000, for vinyl record albums or typewriters? Who knows what new industries lie just beyond the horizon? The Italian philosopher Rocco Buttiglione puts it sharply: in the future we will have myriad "work opportunities" but fewer lifetime "jobs." Flexibility will be the key to prosperity, both nationally and individually.

Though we shouldn't exaggerate its extent, this transformation, inseparable from global capitalism's creative destruction, can lead to a social weakness comparable to democratic capitalism's political weaknesses of moral indeterminacy and vulnerability before egalitarianism. Some people will have a hard time adapting to the more flexible work world. Not everyone, after all, is cut out to be one of Tom Wolfe's Masters of the Universe. A life of constant anxiety about one's future is a diminished life. Gray is right about that much. Political thinkers need to think imaginatively about how to reduce such insecurity.

One option, I'm convinced, is a dead end: the agenda of the traditional social democratic left. Social democracy, at least in its extreme forms, massively swells the welfare state, makes government power omnipresent, and drains economic life of its vitality. Unfortunately, many on the left don't see, perhaps can't see, what neoconservative social theorist Irving Kristol calls the "spreading spiritual malaise" of the welfare state. Writing in 1840, Tocqueville imagined a society consumed with such a malaise, in which government, compassionate toward its subjects,

> provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, makes rules for their testaments, and divides their inheritances. . . . It does not break men's will, but softens, bends, and guides it; it seldom enjoins, but often inhibits action; it does not destroy anything, but prevents much being born; it is not at all tyrannical, but it hinders, restrains, enervates, stifles, and stultifies so much that in the end each nation is no more than a flock of timid and hardworking animals with government as its shepherd.

Tocqueville's nightmare of tutelary despotism, a world without risk or human excellence, is the result toward which a certain kind of social democracy tends. It solves the problem of insecurity at the cost of restricting initiative.

More promising are the recommendations of Michael Novak in his 1996 book *Business as a Calling: Work and the Examined Life.* First, Novak argues, policymakers should move to establish personal ownership of benefit packages (especially health care benefits, which companies carry only by historical accident) that can move from job to job with a worker should he be displaced by creative destruction or choose a new career path. Second, as a way of combating labor's decline in an era of flexible economies, Novak proposes that visionary unions reconstitute themselves as independent business corporations, supplying trained workers, as needed, to other firms. Neither of these suggestions would eliminate insecurity, but they would be pragmatic, nonutopian ways of lessening the anxiety an open society causes while preserving its opportunity-creating dynamism.

A more flexible economy also will require new habits, and new ways of teaching them. Buttiglione has made this point repeatedly: "People must learn to learn, but not learn just technical knowledge, because this changes easily." Instead, Buttiglione argues, individuals must be willing and able to adapt. If once one knew how to make vinyl albums, one must learn today how to operate the machines that make compact discs; tomorrow, one will probably have to learn to do something else as technology continues to evolve. Europe's stagnating welfare states have been, for decades now, more set on consuming wealth than creating it. Thinking primarily of them (though the lesson holds for all advanced economies), Buttiglione calls for an educational renewal that will again make work a central virtue in our democratic societies.

Responsible thought—Furet's sad analysis of reality, not Gray's phantasmagoria—also has, then, an essential role to play in the economic realm. It must weigh the advantages and disadvantages of the plurality of market models. And it must seek to temper the disadvantages of each. The market, we need to remember, is an instrument (a point Gray does grasp) and we can always try to make it more effective in securing human flourishing. It can be viewed

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as an Enlightenment ideology comparable to communism—a secular religion, in effect—only if profit becomes a society's regnant deity. I don't think things are that bad yet, but democratic capitalism's economics, like its politics, are imperfect, far from utopian shores.

In the economic life of democratic capitalism, too, we need vigilance and reconciliation to the flawed and often tragic nature of the human world. This is as true as it has ever been in the age of global capitalism, which promises to make us at once more prosperous and more anxious, and constantly beckons the specter of tutelary despotism as an answer to our fears.

Gray makes another argument, an old argument, that has always shadowed bourgeois society. The free market, he claims, is incompatible with traditional forms of life and leads to a culture of anomic individualism, family disintegration, and social upheaval. Agreeing with Gray, at least in part, is Francis Fukuyama, author of the justly famous *The End of History and the Last Man*, which argued, wrongly but well, that man's political history had reached its terminus in bourgeois liberal democracy.

In his most recent book, *The Great Disruption*, Fukuyama blames the social chaos of the democratic world of the past thirty-five years—spiraling crime, rising divorce, tragically high abortion and illegitimacy rates, and worsening levels of trust and citizenship—on the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial economy, a process that began during the 1960s. "Was it just by accident," Fukuyama rhetorically asks, "that these negative social trends, which together reflected weakening social bonds and common values holding people together in Western societies, occurred just as economies in those societies were making the transition from the industrial to the information era?" Fukuyama's answer: no. The Great Disruption is the poisonous fruit of the economic trends of the past three decades.

What was it, though, about the postindustrial economy that led to such dire consequences? The first key for Fukuyama is the transformation it wrought in the nature of work. In the industrial era, most work was labor intensive. Men were more suited to it than women, simply because of their greater physical strength. But the postindustrial economy, Fukuyama explains, "substitutes information for material product." In an information economy, instead of the muscular assembly-line auto worker getting big rewards, it's the brainy programmer designing the car's computer system who draws the sizable salary.

Such far-reaching change in the nature of work opened the way for women to enter the workforce in large numbers. Women leaving home to compete for jobs put unprecedented pressures on the family by, among other things, diminishing the father's traditional role as breadwinner. The decline of the family, Fukuyama notes, correlates with many of the social pathologies, including crime, that have afflicted the economically advanced Western societies since the sixties. Intensifying the strain on the family, he continues, was a technological invention of the postindustrial era: the Pill. The Pill encouraged the "liberation" of women from the constraints of the hearth, Fukuyama stresses. But it also had an effect on men's behavior by altering their attitude toward the risks of sex. It helped turn them into cads by separating sex from obligations toward child rearing. Men's ties to family life, already fragile since they have fewer natural bonds toward their offspring than do women, became precarious.

The postindustrial economy drives the Great Disruption in a second way, Fukuyama suggests, and here his argument exactly mirrors that of Gray and sociologist Daniel Bell, who famously wrote in the 1970s of the "cultural contradictions of capitalism." The breathtaking innovation of the information economy, and the kaleidoscope of choices it allows, "spills over" into moral and social norms, corroding authority and weakening the bonds of family, neighborhood, and nation. When I can choose from one hundred different brands of breakfast cereal, Fukuyama seems to be claiming, I will want one hundred different sexual partners, too, and be angry if my priest or my mother frowns on my desire. We begin to choose our moralities, our pasts, and even our sexualities in the postindustrial bazaar. Faced with such individualizing forces, small wonder that the moral order has been badly damaged.

All this makes the end of history sound very unsatisfying. Not to worry, Fukuyama reassures us, for the Great Reconstruction has begun. Man can't live in the rubble of anarchy for long. His social nature and his self-interested reason lead him to "renorm" social life, to invent new moral rules for getting along with his fellow man. Along with nature and reason, the ongoing turbulence of the postindustrial economy itself encourages the reemergence of social norms—or "social capital," as Fukuyama calls it. "A modern, high-tech society," he writes, "cannot get along without [social norms] and will face considerable incentives to produce them." We're already seeing the signs of the new order, Fukuyama notes: safer streets as crime drops, falling illegitimacy and divorce rates, an increase in the level of neighborly trust. Fukuyama draws on game theory

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and a formidable range of recent research in the life sciences, including evolutionary biology and primatology, to make his point, but the upshot is clear: the end of history marches on, with just a thirty-five-year cultural disruption to slow it down. If Gray is Cassandra, Fukuyama is Pangloss.

What should we think of Fukuyama on democratic capitalism's recent history? *The Great Disruption* contains a wealth of data that will be mined for years to come. But Fukuyama's argument is fundamentally flawed.

His explanation of the Great Disruption, first of all, is unsatisfactory. There is a stronger cultural component to moral breakdown in the West than Fukuyama concedes. If the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial economy undermined moral life throughout the Western democracies, as he claims, why didn't the same change lead to disorder in Japan and South Korea? As Fukuyama admits, nothing comparable to the divorce and illegitimacy of the Western democracies exists in these Asian societies; crime rates in Japan have actually dropped over the period of the Great Disruption. Apparently, their thicker communal and familial cultures have staved off social disorder. But this would indicate, against the thrust of Fukuyama's argument, that culture moves with a strong degree of independence from economics. Moreover, the Pill didn't drop out of the sky one day on unsuspecting bourgeois societies, but grew out of profound cultural and moral shifts—in particular the rise of feminism—that thus far have had less resonance in Asia.

Nor does Fukuyama sufficiently stress the role of law and policy in the West's social woes. Would divorce have increased so dramatically had Western societies not liberalized divorce laws? Would crime have so ravaged America's cities in the absence of laws coddling criminals? Would the number of abortions have skyrocketed had liberal regimes not legalized abortion? Of course not. Yet a postindustrial economy didn't force these changes in law and policy, which occurred in varying degrees throughout the West over the past three decades. Rather, they too grew out of profound cultural and moral shifts—in particular the triumph in elite circles of a desiccated form of liberal thought—that thus far haven't penetrated Asian societies to the same degree. In short, culture and politics seem to be the primary explanatory factors for the Great Disruption, not capitalist economics.

Culture and politics are the principal realms of man's liberty and reason. Fukuyama's refusal to grant them a major place in his analysis isn't just the product of his quasi-Marxist economism; it follows from his reductive conception of human nature, which, despite his claims, is anything but Aristotelian. The new age sciences he employs are rigidly deterministic. Fukuyama protests that he's no determinist, but I wonder if it's possible to embrace these life sciences uncritically, as he does, and still leave a place for freedom. Evolutionary biology, for example, with its theory of the "selfish gene," interprets a mother's sacrifice for her child not as a free act of love but as a quest to propagate her genetic heritage. This interpretation is untestable, a matter of belief. Yet if it's a matter of belief, why believe it? Doing so renders our moral vocabulary vacant and makes the human world literally senseless. If his notion of freedom is thin, Fukuyama's understanding of human reason isn't any thicker: his is not the proud reason of Kant, let alone Aristotle, but is purely instrumental. It teaches us the most efficient way to get from a to b, and that's about it.

Given Fukuyama's reliance on untenable economic and scientific reductionisms and his pinched view of reason, I find his optimism about moral renewal in liberal democratic societies no more convincing than his account of its breakdown. Man's nature limits his freedom, but within those limits experiments in living can take him far from recognizably good ways of life, where his faculties can flourish, toward ways of life that diminish his spirit and lead, in the long run, to social breakdown. Who can say how long a society can continue running—and in some ways improving—while its spiritual life declines? Furthermore, why should we expect the same postindustrial economy Fukuyama thinks led to the Great Disruption to help heal it? Simply because an economy "needs" something doesn't mean human beings will supply it.

Fukuyama's good news is also more ambiguous than it first appears. "If the rate of divorce has fallen," observes historian Gertrude Himmelfarb, "the rate of cohabitation has almost doubled in the past decade alone, and couples living together without benefit of marriage can separate (and do so more frequently) without benefit of divorce." If the rate of out-of-wedlock births has decreased, the ratio of such births to all births has only leveled off, and done so at a high level. If abortions are fewer, in part it is due to the new respectability of unmarried motherhood. And so on. As Himmelfarb testily puts it, "For almost every favorable statistic, an ornery conservative can cite an unfavorable one."

The democratic capitalist societies, then, still have a cultural problem. And here's where things get tricky, because both Gray and Fukuyama brush up against the truth. When moral nihilism dominates

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the culture, as it does in Western societies—especially in the U.S.—free markets can radicalize it by shouting it, so to speak, from the rooftops. Not long ago, a television commercial for Mastercard featured pallid-faced kids who looked like junkies, with nose rings, tattoos, and the whole range of alienation's disfiguring equipment. The message was simple: if you have money (or at least credit), who cares what your attitude toward life might be? And Mastercard is not alone: there's Nike's famous "Just Do It" ad campaign extolling release from constraints (which Fukuyama himself mentions), Calvin Klein's kiddie-porn, and Time-Warner's continuing depredations (the most recent being a rap song about killing New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani). In such cases, we witness the corporate world bottom-feeding for profit, and it's disgusting.

The greatest threat to the future of democratic capitalism, I believe, lies in this growing association of capitalist power and moral libertinism. A few years ago, Buttiglione made a pregnant observation. "Libertinism," he said, "is in a certain sense more dangerous than Marxism, because it penetrates more deeply." Instead of crushing man's reason and his passions, as did communism, moral libertinism turns man's passions against the truth. Marxism, as we've seen, was a religious atheism, a secular religion that hubristically proposed to build utopia only to open the gates of Hell. Libertinism, Buttiglione maintains, is a "negative atheism"—it "corrupts societies and is unable to offer the values needed for a society to live." Not everyone can "just do it," or else society crumbles. In the long run, Buttiglione thinks libertine capitalism "is existentially unbearable." But in the short run, and that can last a long time, it coarsens the human world and intensifies the Great Disruption.

Gray and Fukuyama are right, then, to see a link between contemporary capitalism and nihilism, but they get things backward: nihilism is first imported into the market, not exported from it. Nihilism results, Buttiglione says, from the "suicide of culture," and here he means culture in the sense of *Bildung*, not as an anthropological term as I've been using it. Our elite spiritual enterprises (Buttiglione mentions philosophy and theology, and I would add art and literature) have become ever more corrupt. In their main variants, they no longer even bother to seek the true, the good, and the beautiful, however plural and difficult to attain these ends might be. The suicide of culture sends its tenebrous signals throughout the human world; the market receives the signals, dumbs them down or brightens them up, and then seduces whomever it can. The bourgeois regime's moral indeterminacy weakens its capacity to resist.

The connection between nihilism and capitalism is accidental and need not last. But the struggle against it requires, not reconciliation to this-worldly realities, as with democratic capitalism's politics and economics, but something inspired: the rebirth of culture. Here should be directed the spiritual longings that Furet worried might again find their way into politics. We will need to paint again with the grace of Tintoretto; write with the humanity of Shakespeare; philosophize with the love of truth of Aristotle and Aquinas; and educate our best in the riches of our dual heritage of faith and reason. Our religious bodies should be at the forefront of this struggle, which is both moral and aesthetic. (Fukuyama laughs at the idea of a religious revival that might heal the Great Disruption, describing it as "a Western version of Ayatollah Khomeini returning to Iran on a jetliner." But this merely indicates his limited grasp of human possibilities.)

Politics, too, will have a crucial role, though not as a secular religion. Statesmanship can help set society's moral and aesthetic tone, and shame the powers that have bargained with nihilism. And postliberal policies, like those New York City has successfully implemented in fighting crime, can chip away at the decisions that fed the Great Disruption.

These three important books, then, help illumine the democratic capitalist prospect. Here is what it looks like at the dawn of a new millennium: in politics, it finds itself haunted by moral indeterminacy and weak before egalitarian demands; in economics, troubled by the anxieties of the rapid change that creates wealth; and in culture, suffering from the suicide of the elevated pursuits that should protect man's highest ends. Not pretty, until you realize the alternatives—some undreamed of political monster arising from bourgeois discontents, a spirit-sapping tutelary despotism, or a radicalization of libertine capitalism.

Working a slight change on an old truism: democratic capitalism is still the worst regime, except for all the others. Perhaps, if we're both vigilant and lucky, the twenty-first century will not rival Berlin's twentieth as "the most terrible in Western history." FT

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The Church and the City

M. Francis Mannion

Since the official validation of Christianity in the fourth century, ecclesiastical leaders have built places of worship in central and highly visible locations. They were not motivated just by grandeur and power. In addition, they sensed that, to be authentic, Christian presence in the world must be public. For over 1,500 years, church buildings have been central and unifying elements in the configurations of cities, towns, and villages. Though in a world of skyscrapers and office towers churches are no longer so prominent, the public role of church buildings to sacramentalize the heavenly city and redeem the earthly one remains critically important and demands new and compelling expression. (What I say here about church buildings is true of the Church at all levels. Accordingly, in what follows the word "church" moves freely from reference to particular local institutions to ecclesiastical life generally.)

The theme of the two cities has long been a favorite of Christian authors. Caesarius of Arles writes: "There are two cities, dearest brethren. The first is the city of this world, the second, the city of paradise. The good Christian is always journeying in the city of the world, but he is recognized as a citizen of the city of paradise."

The most marvelous image that Christians have of eternity is that of the redeemed city. In the Book of Revelation we read: "I . . . saw a new Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down out of Heaven from God, beautiful as a bride prepared to meet her husband. I heard a loud voice from the throne cry out: 'This is God's dwelling among men. He shall dwell with them and they shall be His people and He shall be their God who is always with them. He shall wipe every tear from their eyes, and there shall be no more death or mourning, crying out or pain, for the former world has passed away'" (21:2-4).

Into this heavenly city God will, at the end of time, gather humanity, creation, cosmos, and history. He will assume the human city into the heavenly city. Eternity will not be an eternity of disembodied spirits but an eternity of all that is most noble, graceful, and beautiful in the human city. If human existence is inextricable from the life of the human city, then the human city will be raised from the dead with humankind, freed from all that is enslaving, dehumanizing, and tragic.

The human city throughout history seems to have had intimations of its own immortality. Jacques Ellul wrote: "Our cities . . . are a sign of the world's destiny, because these cities bear in their bosoms all the hopes of man for divinity." Human cities at their most noble and beautiful are never merely practical; they are cosmic. They seek to embody in their layout, buildings, institutions, streets, landmarks, civic rituals, symbols, and stories the abode of the city of the gods.

The more the whole culture of a city is based on a rich, expressive symbol system, the more significant it is. Cities are often founded, for instance, on a claim to divine intervention: Rome on the myth of Romulus and Remus; Jerusalem on the spot where Adam is buried; Salt Lake City on a dream of creating the new Jerusalem. The city at its best generates its initiatives from dreams of a great and unlimited future, not from short-term or purely pragmatic ideals. The city is the place of hopes and dreams, as the utopian thought of Plato, Augustine, and Thomas More attest. The city is the repository of common memories (which is why people love old cities). The city symbolizes deeds and achievements not yet possible (which is why we love bustling cities

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and dislike dull ones). At its most humane, the city is not a faceless or shapeless amalgam, but a patterned and harmonious ordering of household, neighborhood, public institution, and civic center. In the good city, industry and commerce, education and intellectual pursuit, religion and spiritual expression, art and festival coexist dynamically and interconnectedly. A city that ignores nature becomes a machine; a city that crowns nature is glorious.

The ancient art of civility is the art of living together in the city gracefully and cooperatively; civility exists to make good citizens, and its lack occasions the worst evils of the city. Civility at its best involves the advancement and acceptance of well-established personal and communal rituals that are beautiful, dignified, and graceful. The opposite of good manners is fighting in the streets.

The more a city at all levels has a well-defined ritual and symbol system, the more humane, noble, and beautiful it is. The great public rituals of a city are particularly important. Washington is never more Washington than when it inaugurates or buries a President. London is never more London than when its citizenry gathers for a great royal occasion. Salt Lake City is never more Salt Lake City than on July 24, when its foundation on that date in 1847 is remembered and celebrated. In its civic rituals and manners, its symbols, monuments, and historic spaces, the life of a city is condensed, unified, and displayed.

If the features of the earthly city are most fully manifested in its civic rituals and symbols, the fullest expression of the holy and eternal city is found in the liturgy. The task of the liturgy is to symbolize and sacramentalize the liturgy of the heavenly city in the midst of the earthly city. Through its liturgical life, the Church becomes a living icon of Heaven, an arena in which the drama of the holy city is enacted, an anticipation of the redeemed life of the New Jerusalem.

In the Western world for nearly two millennia, great urban churches have played a crucial role in unifying the heavenly and earthly cities. If in the Church the heavenly city descends to earth, then in the Church also the earthly city is raised up, its sight lifted to heaven. The liturgy of the Church is the embodiment on earth of the life and language of the heavenly city. The public worship of the Christian community gathers up the liturgy of the human city, what Teilhard de Chardin called the "Mass on the World," the "Hymn of the Universe," and what Karl Rahner spoke of as the "Liturgy of the World." The liturgy gives expression to the religious yearnings of the human city. This is what Louis Bouyer meant when he said that in the vision of the Fathers of the Church, "the whole world is essentially liturgical."

The Church is—or should be—never more intensely aware of the city than when at worship. In liturgy, the Church is opened out to the world, and the world in all its dimensions is drawn into the act of worship. Aidan Kavanagh writes: "*What* the liturgical assembly of Christian orthodoxy does is the world. *Where* the liturgical assembly does this is the public forum of the world's radical business, the *Thingplatz* of a restored and redeemed creation. *When* the liturgical assembly does this is the moment of the world's rebirth—the eighth day of creation, the first day of the last and newest age." Nothing less "rides upon the act of the assembly, determines its style, lays bare its service and mission for the life of the world."

Both Kavanagh and Jesuit theologian John Baldovin have shown how early Christian worship was a highly civic affair, just as the Church itself was from the beginning a public, urban institution. Baldovin describes how in medieval Jerusalem, Rome, Constantinople, and many other cities where Christianity formed the symbolic basis for social life, worship was not confined to the neighborhood church. "It was public; it acclaimed the society's connectedness with the sacred; it made the streets and plazas sacred places in addition to the churches and shrines." Even more significantly, Baldovin says, "the early churches were not only part of the city, they represented it. They were a miniature representation of public life." The early Christian church building, the basilica, "did not separate Christians from the city, like a kind of sacred oasis, but rather brought the city and its concerns into the church." St. Augustine could say: "The house of God is itself a city."

This vision has enormous practical implications for how liturgy is conducted. Liturgy must be public rather than private, civic rather than domestic, cosmic and not merely psychological, natural and not simply spiritual. The Church and its liturgy do not exist in a place apart from the human city but as institutions in the midst of the city gracefully transfusing and redeeming its life. The liturgy is the unification of the New Jerusalem and the human city, so that in the process everything human is redeemed.

By now the reader may be asking how the liturgy is capable of so monumental a task. Narrowly conceived, it cannot possibly carry such weight. But the liturgy is not contained or restricted within the time and space of Sunday morning. The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of Vatican II pointed out that the liturgy is the "fount" and "summit"—the beginning and end—of the Church's life, but it is not all there is or all that needs to be done in Christian life. Liturgy flows out into catechesis, charity, education, pas-

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toral care, and evangelization.

One of my favorite functional images of the Church is one suggested some years ago by Gregory Pierce of the Chicago-based National Center for the Laity: the Church as "campaign headquarters." The parish church is not a club, not a therapeutic institution, not an arena of escape. It is the place where the people of God formally gather and prepare to go out to do the business of redeeming the city. This point is captured in the very meaning of the word "liturgy": public work or public service.

One can specify the way in which the liturgy flows out into public service by reference to three symbolic places that highlight human needs at their most severe: Babel, Rameses, and Philistia. Two are cities; the third a pseudo-city. These three places represent, in different ways, human deprivation in civic configuration: Babel, the city of confusion; Rameses, the city of sin and oppression; Philistia, the pseudo-city of ugliness. Taken together, they correspond negatively to the theological transcendentals: truth, goodness, and beauty.

Over these three symbolic cities reigns the city that is their radical opposite in all respects: the new and eternal Jerusalem, the city of goodness, truth, and beauty. The Church, in its liturgy and the ministries consequent to it, is called to do nothing less than embody the New Jerusalem in the midst of the modern city in which the ghosts of Babel, Rameses, and Philistia are sighted often.

As the story is told in Genesis 11:1-9, Babel is the archetype of the confused, disoriented, fragmented city—the place where, to humble human pride, "the Lord confused the speech of all the world." The confusion of Babel is significant because it has been replicated in every city in history. In the poem "The Rock," T. S. Eliot described modern London as a city full of the "knowledge of words, and ignorance of the Word." James Dougherty of the University of Notre Dame describes the modern city as "never silent; it speaks with a voice of its own, the voice of false prophets in Jerusalem, of sophists in Athens and Carthage, of gramophones and television in London and Wichita. Like the prophet's cry, the city's own voice summons the citizens to believe—but to believe in their common self-sufficiency and in the durability and satisfaction of the city's goods. Its call to worship is ultimately to self-worship."

The problems of Babel are reflected in modern America in our ongoing debates about history, identity, the future, and how we can live together as a nation. The America of the recent past has lost faith in words, in reliably coherent meanings, in the possibility of common language, in the very idea of truth. We live increasingly in a culture in which language is suspect, a culture of contestation regarding meaning, a world of illusions and hyperreality.

The mission of the Church is to reverse Babel, to give new voice and understanding to communities struggling to achieve meaning. Such a reversal began at Pentecost. We read in the Acts of the Apostles (2:4-11): The disciples "were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to express themselves in foreign tongues and make bold proclamation as the Spirit prompted them. . . . [The people] asked in utter amazement, . . . 'How is it that each of us hears them in his native tongue? We are Parthians, Medes, and Elamites. We live in Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the regions of Libya around Cyrene. . . . Yet each of us hears them speaking in his own tongue about the marvels God has accomplished.'"

The mission of the Church is to speak the language of Pentecost, to introduce this voice into the city of Babel, to find and engage those voices in Babel that seek out and give expression to truth. Christians individually and the Church corporately are called to a ministry of the word that will redeem the language of the city, provide a meaningful account of life, and enable the citizenry to speak a language that is unitive, cooperative, and dialogical.

In their liturgical assemblies, the churches end the Scripture readings with "The Word of the Lord," or some variation thereof. What an earth-shaking proclamation! Can the mayor say of his or her speeches, "The Word of the Lord"? The university president? The head of the Chamber of Commerce? Too easily and often Christian disciples take the word of God in their midst for granted. Do the inhabitors of churches really believe that God is present in the word, that Christ himself is speaking? That the world is being created anew by the word formally proclaimed every Sunday?

When I see the Gospel book carried solemnly by the deacon in procession with candle bearers, reverently venerated with incense, solemnly proclaimed, kissed by the bishop and carefully enthroned, I think of what Annie Dillard asks about Christian worship:

> Does anyone have the foggiest idea what sort of power we so blithely invoke? Or, as I suspect, does no one believe a word of it? The churches are children playing on the floor with their chemistry sets, mixing up a batch of TNT to kill a Sunday morning. It is madness to wear ladies' straw hats and velvet hats to church; we should all be wearing crash helmets. Ushers should issue life preservers and

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signal flares; they should lash us to our pews. For the sleeping God may wake someday and take offense, or the waking God may draw us out to where we can never return.

I find the mainstream churches in America today—Protestant and Catholic—very unserious about the word on Sunday morning. Those who read it do so casually, congregations wait for it to end, homilists treat it as occasionally useful thought-starters. The invocation of the speech of heaven has become psychologized, privatized, and powerless.

Only when the Church has its own house in decent order can it become a credible place of public education, conversation, and dialogue. It can go out to, and invite in, the city and its institutions—including the university, the government, business, and the professions—so that the wisdom of God and the voices of the city may meet for the salvation of the world.

Around the ambos and pulpits in our churches on Sunday morning gather the citizens of the human city to hear and celebrate a redeeming word that, were it fully effected, would mean the triumph of the New Jerusalem over Babel. The journey from Babel to the Heavenly City is the awesome responsibility of the Church. Standing as a permanent sacrament of Pentecost, the Church draws the world forward out of the old city and into the new and eternal city of truth.

The second symbolic city, Rameses, evokes the human city in desperate need of justice, holiness, goodness, freedom, and dignity. Rameses in Egypt was one of the dreadful places where the enslaved Hebrew people were forced to construct a "supply city" for Pharaoh. We read in Exodus 1: 8-14: "Then a new king . . . came to power in Egypt. He said to his subjects, 'Look how numerous and powerful the Israelite people are growing. . . . Come, let us deal shrewdly with them.' . . . Accordingly, taskmasters were set over the Israelites to oppress them with forced labor. Thus they had to build for Pharaoh the supply cities of Pithom and Rameses. . . . The Egyptians, then, dreaded the Israelites and reduced them to cruel slavery, making life bitter for them with hard work in mortar and brick and all kinds of field work—the whole cruel fate of slaves."

The Bible is replete with dreadful cities like Rameses, as is human history, ancient and modern. The human city has gathered together and intensified all the personal and communal vices of which human beings are capable—pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth, injustice, opportunism, inequality, lying, cheating, neglect, competitiveness, and violence—all that constitute moral slavery.

These vices are by no means unique to the city, but the city seems to put them under pressure, to advertise them and give them a high profile. Because of this, not a few commentators have taken a distinctly negative view of the human city. Jacques Ellul declares: "All the inhabitants of the city are sooner or later destined to become prostitutes and members of the proletariat."

The history of the human city may be read in biblical terms as a movement from Rameses to the New Jerusalem. Jesus prefigured the advent of the eternal city of holiness, goodness, and liberation in a key moment in Nazareth at the beginning of his public ministry. In the Gospel of Luke we read: "Jesus came to Nazareth . . . and entering the synagogue on the sabbath . . . he stood up to do the reading. When the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed him, he unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: 'The spirit of the Lord is upon me; therefore he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and release to prisoners, to announce a year of favor from the Lord.'. . . Then he began by saying to them, 'Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing'" (4:14-19).

In this crucial event, Jesus gathered up all the hopes of Israel, all the dreams of Isaiah and the prophets, and he announced the inauguration of the long-expected era of divine salvation, redemption, healing, and joy. That moment in Nazareth prefigured everything Jesus was to do in his public ministry.

Jesus' ministry of inaugurating the holy city of God within the conditions of the human city continues in the life of the Church, and stands at the very heart of what the Church must do in history. This ministry, like all others, is symbolically condensed in the liturgy. The worshiping assembly of the Christian community embodies a whole ethical philosophy and way of life founded on the holiness, justice, and righteousness of God in Christ. When we step into the world of the liturgy, we are already in an arena of ethical and moral goodness transcending anything available in the human city. We are already living out the ethics of the holy city.

In the liturgy is set forth a whole system of redeemed interrelationships. Liturgy offers a communal model of existence rather than an individualistic one. At the Lord's Table people of all classes and races are welcome—surely a model of coexistence that is by no means common in the human city. Where but in the liturgical assembly are governors and bag ladies, rich and poor, white, black, and brown brought together in solidarity? In the Eucharist we share our resources by offering gifts. In the Mass we

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offer the kind of sacrifice that, to mean anything, as the prophets constantly proclaimed, must be translated into daily mercy and justice. In the Eucharist we seek forgiveness publicly and offer each other the sign of peace—gestures that have much to say in a world of self-assertiveness, hostility, and violence. We take the Eucharist out to the homes of the shut-in, thereby taking a stance against the abandonment and marginalizing of the old in urban wastelands. In baptism men and women are declared children of God and endowed with a value beyond anything they could ever earn for themselves. In penance we say that no one is beyond the pale of God's mercy.

What a vision this holds up in a world prone to vengeance, condemnation, and the rejection of the sinner, the prisoner, and the criminal. We anoint the sick and minister to them as Christ did, fighting every social tendency to see illness and old age as meaningless and worthless. In all our liturgies we pray for the Church, the world, the local community, and those in need—and then are sent out to help effect that for which we have prayed.

Why the liturgy today does not seem to have the ethical and socially transforming power I am describing here is a complex matter. We can be sure, however, that if the liturgy is not a public affair, is not a liturgy of the city, then its interests will not be in social transformation. If liturgy is a small group gathering for therapeutic purposes, then its gaze will be inward and, both conceptually and practically, it will abandon the city. Christians need a new awareness of what we are doing ethically in the liturgy. We need to take seriously one of the most neglected rites of all, the dismissal rite—which sends us on a sanctifying mission into the city. If we do not take the dismissal seriously in this respect, then the liturgy becomes, as the Old Testament prophets never tired of saying, false worship.

The Church's social teaching is not a question of dabbling in politics. We cannot forget that the word "politics" comes from the Greek word *polis*—the city. The Church should never "dabble" in politics; it must competently, systematically, and confidently immerse itself in the political, in the life of the polis. The Church must avoid, of course, intrusion into governmental politics, steer clear of secular platforms and shun party allegiances. Nevertheless, it must involve itself in what Robert Webber and Rodney Clapp call "depth politics," or what Robert Jenson calls "eschatological politics"—politics in its deepest connection to the coming of God's Kingdom.

In its moral and social ministries, then, the urban church is called to prefigure the redeemed city in which there will be no more death, mourning, or pain, no more evil or sin. Local churches should be places of energetic and systematic charity and service, hospitality and welcome, advocacy and vigilance; zones of sanctuary for the poor, homeless, lonely, depressed; agencies of forgiveness, wisdom, and sanctification.

The journey from Rameses to the *shalom* of the New Jerusalem is the awesome responsibility of the Church. Standing as a permanent sacrament, it draws the world forward out of the old city and into the new and eternal city of goodness.

We turn finally to the pseudo-city of Philistia, a name synonymous with ugliness and anti-aestheticism. In the dictionary, a Philistine is not only "a native or inhabitant of ancient Philistia" but "a crass, prosaic, often priggish individual guided by material rather than by intellectual or artistic values." If, as recent scholars have suggested, the Philistines have been unfairly caricatured in this regard, then the lesson may be that every city is Philistia: every city embodies ugliness, crassness, and materialism—the antitheses of beauty.

Beauty in the Scriptures is largely related to the concept of glory, especially the glory of God. If the liturgy is the principal manifestation of God's worldly presence, then it is, by that fact, the primordial place of God's glory, the ongoing event of transfiguration, *the* sacrament of beauty. The liturgy of the Church is at its best an invocation, an embodiment, an anticipation of the beautiful city, the New Jerusalem. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* aptly describes the sacraments and the liturgy in artistic terms as "God's masterpieces," "the masterworks of God."

The liturgy of Eastern Christianity has given far more attention than has the West to the theme of divine glory, splendor, and beauty. Eastern church history contains striking accounts of liturgical occasions as encounters with God's glory. In the late tenth century, we are told, the grand prince Vladimir from what is today the Ukraine was planning to introduce his people into the civilized world. So he sent ambassadors in search of a religion of truth and beauty. The ambassadors came back and reported negatively about Jewish, Muslim, and Latin worship. The last they described as without fervor, cold and dead. But among the Byzantines, they reported, the liturgy was so beautiful that "we did not know if we were in Heaven or on Earth, for on Earth there is no such beauty. . . . Only one thing do we know: that God was living there with men, and that their form of worship is the best of all. We cannot forget this beauty." Not surprisingly, the biblical event of the Transfiguration is central to Eastern conceptions of the liturgy.

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It could hardly be said that the liturgy of the West lacks beauty or is unconcerned about beauty (though philistinism in liturgical guise is far too readily identifiable today, and modern American liturgical practice is not generally known for its beauty, glory, or solemnity). Western liturgy has had and continues to have its glorious expressions: Chartres Cathedral, Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel, the Abbey of Melk, Palestrina, Mozart, Britten, Vaughan Williams, Cranmer's English, Evensong at King's College in Cambridge, the preaching at the National Cathedral in Washington. Yet beauty in Western liturgy is all too often regarded as accidental. The basic problem is that the churches of the West—unlike the East—lack an adequate theology of beauty, an omission partially compensated for by the work in recent years of Roman Catholics Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Saward and Anglicans John Riches and Richard Harries.

But because beauty is regarded in Western liturgy as an accident, a luxury, a decoration, it should not be surprising that Western *culture* has made beauty accidental also. Consider the modern movement in architecture and urban planning, which, in its rationalism and functionalism, has left cities and public spaces very unbeautiful indeed. In the West, we imprison beauty in museums and concert halls; we have taken beauty off the streets and out of our public places. At the same time, popular culture has become ugly, superficial, and stultifying. We have lost the ability to celebrate, to hold festival, to be playful in the most profound sense. Our social rituals are more and more rough and primitive. America today is not a polite society, meaning that the daily rituals of the polis are in a state of disintegration.

In an increasingly materialistic culture, the ordinary, the mundane, and the worldly are not, ironically, taken more seriously than in religious cultures; they are taken less seriously. What, for example, do water, wine, wheat, work, creativity, and leisure mean in popular cultural terms? They are merely functional and utilitarian. But place these in a sacramental context, as occurs habitually in the East, and they become elements of God's glory, of divine beauty. Orthodox theologian Paul Evdokimov says about created reality that "everything is destined for a liturgical fulfillment." Olive oil and water "attain their fullness as (conductor) elements for grace on regenerated man. Wheat and wine achieve their ultimate raison d'être in the eucharistic chalice." The Church's worship "integrates the most elementary actions of life: drinking, eating, washing, speaking, acting, communion. . . . It restores to them their meaning and true destiny, that is, to be building blocks in the cosmic temple of God's glory."

What is human work but a participation in divine creation? What is leisure but an anticipation of the unlabored life of heaven? What does the artist do but restore creation to its divine origin and end? Beauty in all its material and practical expressions exists to draw humanity into the redeeming beauty of God. This is surely what Dostoevsky had in mind when one of his characters in *The Idiot* declares that "beauty will save the world."

This doxological and aesthetic vision provides the protocol for the Church's ministry of and to the arts. Churches do not hold organ recitals, arts festivals, and concerts simply because these are nice, inspiring pursuits. Commitment to the beautiful is intrinsic to the Church's life for the reason that the Church's vision is the eternally beautiful city. This commitment, it may be argued, is especially incumbent upon large and well-endowed urban churches.

The Church today can play a role in bringing the arts back from alienation from the transcendent—an alienation that has led the arts themselves into severe disorientation and crisis. Church art programs can elevate and ennoble what beauty exists in the human city and among its artists and poets.

The eucharistic preface of All Saints' Day in the Roman rite calls the liturgy "the festival of your holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem, our mother." The Church, through its public worship, can model a conception of the city that is festive and majestic. It can raise the sights of Philistia to the heights of glory.

The journey from Philistia to Zion is the awesome responsibility of the Church. Standing as a permanent sacrament of the Transfiguration, it draws forward the old city into the new and eternal city of beauty—a city in which truth, justice, and beauty embrace in God—a city on which all men and women (whether they know it or not) have already set their hearts.

The vision set forth here is idealistic, daunting, unrealistic to be sure (in the sense of being inexhaustible), and we can only take stabs at it; only in the Kingdom of God will it finally materialize. But, as Proverbs says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (29:18). There can be no doubt that the crisis in Christianity today is profoundly connected to a loss of heavenly vision. FT

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The Radical Orthodoxy Project

R. R. Reno

Novelty provides cheap thrills, and a student of Christian theology is rightly skeptical of agendas and programs that claim to renew Christian faith and practice with new concepts, new paradigms, and new theologies. Much that modern theology has hawked as "new" and "renewing" has led to something not unlike nights at the casino—the fun would be innocent were it not for the high cost of having squandered one's patrimony.

At first glance, the "Radical Orthodoxy" movement might seem another passing novelty. Young Cambridge-trained theologians, well-versed in the latest French post-structuralist theory, set out with a self-described "new theology" to engage the trendiest of Continental literary thinkers. John Milbank's *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Blackwell, 1993) takes up the modern and postmodern construction and policing of an independent secular reality. His essays in *The Word Made Strange* (Blackwell, 1997) treat a wide range of philosophical, social, and theological concerns, all under the postmodern premise that "we make signs, yet signs make us and we can never step outside the network of sign-making." Catherine Pickstock's *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Blackwell, 1997) contests modernist and postmodernist despair over the redemptive potency of language. Graham Ward's *Barth, Derrida, and the Language of Theology* (Cambridge University Press, 1995) affirms the fundamental role of "discourse." Recently, all three have joined to edit a programmatic collection of essays, *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (Routledge, 1999), and this volume, like the preceding books, is sedimented with layers of postmodern reflective habits.

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It would be a great mistake, however, to write off the proponents of Radical Orthodoxy because of their jargon-filled postmodernism. It may invite silliness, but more often it loosens the grip of Derrida and Foucault on the intellectual and moral imaginations of the lost souls drifting through contemporary universities. Milbank et al. use the prevailing vocabulary and verbal techniques of cultural and literary studies to expose the dark emptiness of secular postmodernism, hoisting it on its own petard. If Radical Orthodoxy is any sign of the future, tomorrow's academy will see countless theses on the subversive power, not of transsexuality, but of the Eucharist—in all, a welcome development.

Radical Orthodoxy's proponents, then, have constructive as well as critical ambitions, and in the long run the constructive ambitions are the more important. Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward hope to articulate an encompassing Christian perspective that will supersede and replace secularisms both modern and postmodern. Their goal is to uncover a "new theology," new because it renounces the mediations and compromises of so-called modern theology. Yet their positive achievement is uneven, and understanding the failures of Radical Orthodoxy should occasion some sobering thoughts about the way forward. A genuinely postmodern theology requires spiritual disciplines very alien to our terribly creative and rebellious late-modern souls.

However deeply invested Radical Orthodoxy might be in the vocabulary, thought forms, and literature of postmodernism, it rests on a different foundational assumption about what we might call *the glue that holds the world together.* It is Augustine's vision of heavenly peace, made effective in the dynamic and binding power of divine purpose, that shapes Radical Orthodoxy's reflections, not Nietzsche's violence wrought by an omnipotent will-to-

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power. This difference allows Radical Orthodoxy to interpret postmodern thought without being drawn into its orbit, giving Milbank & Co. the perspective from which to expose the nakedness of postmodern nihilism.

The best way to explain the Nietzschean postulate that governs postmodernism is to illustrate it. Consider this piece of "glue that holds our world together": "Marriage is the union of a man and a woman." One of the signal postmodern convictions is that such a claim is contingent. What makes "marriage" mean "union of a man and a woman" is the fact that dictionaries define the words that way, not some underlying essence of "marriage" or an enduring "natural law." Dictionary definitions do not rest on an essential set of immediate truths. We define marriage as we do simply because, well, that is the way we define it. This piece of "glue," like all other pieces, is an arbitrary act of will. The fact that we do, indeed, define words in certain ways is more fundamental than any other fact.

We can easily think that the postmodern conviction that language is arbitrary signals a "relativism." Words such as "marriage," we worry, cannot mean just anything; otherwise, we cannot reliably talk about the world as something that holds a consistent shape, as something glued together with reliability and constancy. Radical Orthodoxy rightly ignores this reaction to postmodernism, which turns out to be an existential anxiety—a modernist reaction to postmodernists that has little relevance to what they actually say. After all, the leading postmodern theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault are preoccupied with the fact that words *do* take on determinate meanings. They are concerned with understanding "identity"—the fixity of so much of what we encounter in language and practice—not depthless flux or "difference." Dictionaries, and the law courts, define marriage as the union of a man and a woman, and our lives are shaped accordingly. The glue is sticky, and postmodern theory is all about explaining just how the glue retains its force.

The terminology and dialectics of postmodernism are daunting, but Radical Orthodoxy uncovers the basic line of analysis: violence gives the world its shape and holds it together. Words have determinate meaning, and therefore retain influence in our lives, argues postmodern theory, because their meanings are enforced by the exercise of power. Derrida's deconstructive project is devoted to exposing the many moments in which violence shapes meaning. He observes, in endless examples culled from the history of philosophy, the ways in which the key ideas that govern Western thought dominate because their alternatives are repressed, hidden, and deferred. Words, and stable meanings, are forged out of the flux of language. A blow of violence must be struck—"Marriage means *this* and not *that*."

But a single blow never settles the matter, so we must deploy constant reinforcement to keep meanings stable. We hold our world together through a perpetual battle against the tendency of our ways of talking and thinking and acting to disperse into alternative possibilities. Identity is defended against difference. Deconstruction, as an intellectual technique, is nothing more than "showing" the original blows and "exposing" the ongoing projects of reinforcement and defense of identity.

Michel Foucault's accounts evoke a more conspiratorial atmosphere, but the underlying explanation of stability and identity is the same. Social networks of power and interest shape language, society, and even human consciousness. Fixed patterns of meaning are carved into the raw material of our humanity. Our definition of marriage, for example, is part of an elaborate system of repression. Foucault's analysis, then, explains why we are not, in fact, relativists. Under the impress of power, our world takes on determinate shape and hardened identity. Violent and malicious power, an impersonal Leviathan dispersed across any number of social practices, fixes our stable identities.

Out of this central claim comes the brutally political nature of the postmodern moral agenda. If power defines marriage as the union of a man and a woman, then power can change that definition. Not coincidentally, postmodern theoreticians are eager to exert power: to urge the judiciary to bring to bear the force of the state, to compel curricular changes, to enforce codes of speech. With enough redirection of power, they assume that marriage can come to mean the union of any two persons. A blow was struck in one direction; a blow can be struck in another. The arbitrary violence of conventional meanings is met by the new violence of postmodern revision. So professors denounce traditional understandings of marriage, scholars distort and willfully misrepresent the role of homosexuality in antiquity, and the entire university tries to shame the recalcitrant into conformity.

Faced with the postmodern premise that violence and power are the basis for identity, the glue that holds things together, Radical Orthodoxy never blinks. Governed by an Augustinian rather than Nietzschean vision, it has no reason to trim and disguise the nihilism of dominant postmodern theory. The dialectical gymnastics designed to make vio-

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lence into the more winsome principle of "difference" are nothing more than the postmodernists' theoretical effort to repress and hide what they are doing, even from themselves. The "play of differences" may sound like good, clean schoolyard fun, but postmodern rhetoric more often recalls the battlefield and penitentiary. An honest Nietzschean acknowledges that the "peace" and "stability" of society, personal identity, and textual meaning are born of domination, and does not try to disguise this truth with labels such as "aesthetic individualism"—unless, of course, such deceptions serve *his* will-to-power. The deconstructors find themselves, to their surprise, led by their own metaphysics of identity and difference into the machine of deconstruction. In its criticism, Radical Orthodoxy need do little more than draw aside the curtain that hides this procedure from the view of postmodern fellow travelers. For Radical Orthodoxy, then, Derrida need not be made into a savior, nor Foucault a saint. In the fevered world of contemporary cultural and literary studies, *that* is something different.

Unblinking opposition is possible because, for Radical Orthodoxy, violence and the power of dominion are not necessary premises to explain why the world is stable, why identity emerges out of difference. "For theology, and theology alone," writes Milbank, "difference remains as real difference, since it is not subordinate to immanent univocal process or the fate of a necessary repression." For example, we can study the history of marriage and observe that Christianity substantively changed its meaning by assimilating the relation of men and women to the relation of Jesus Christ and the Church. Yet we need not conclude that such change resulted from a contest of power. Things can be understood and inhabited across change and difference without submission to power and dominion.

Christian theology counters the Nietzschean nihilism of foundational violence (in the language Radical Orthodoxy borrows from postmodernism) by advancing a participatory framework, an analogical poetics, a *semiosis* of peace, a metanarrative that does not require the postulate of original violence. Put more simply, Radical Orthodoxy hopes to recover Neoplatonic metaphysics as an explanation for the glue that holds the world together. Something can be what it is—a unit of semantic identity or meaning, a person, a social practice—and at the same time depend upon and reach toward something else. Or more strongly, something is real only in and through this constitutive dependence and fecundity. For the Neoplatonist, you, or I, or the value of my moral acts, or the meaning of this essay, *are* as emanating from and returning to the One.

For Radical Orthodoxy, the particular Neoplatonic hierarchies of being, Being, and "beyond Being" are not decisive. What matters is the way in which Neoplatonism treats the world as a differentiated realm of beings and events knit together, not in spite of or against the discrete identities of things, but in harmonious order and toward a common purpose. This view, which Radical Orthodoxy argues is advanced and intensified by classical Christianity (especially by Augustine), operates outside the contrastive logic of identity and difference. Identity is neither a wound in the flux of difference, nor a vulnerable citadel to be defended. Dynamism and difference—"I am coming from and going toward"—constitute identity. The glue is sticky, but it never dries.

This sounds very abstract, a dialectical posturing that defines the Christian participatory alternative simply by negation. The reader is tempted into this interpretation, for the typical style of a Radical Orthodoxy essay tends toward poetical-dialectical constructions of antithesis. For example, Milbank announces that theology must elaborate a "metanarrative of counter-historical interruption of history," a "counter-ethics" and "counter-ontology." But unlike the postmoderns and their continued and very modern dependence upon violence and power, the Radical Orthodoxy crowd promotes a vision of peace. Against the nihilistic conflict between identity and difference, Radical Orthodoxy offers harmonious identity in difference.

Radical Orthodoxy, then, does not reject modern and postmodern assumptions about the foundational role of violence only to exist as a negative critique, dependent on postmodernism for its raison d'être. The Neoplatonic framework so warmly recommended by Radical Orthodoxy offers a theory of identity and meaning based on unity and peace. Consider the role of liturgy as an incorporating force. In an extended meditation on the dynamics of eucharistic celebration, Pickstock wishes to show that the Roman Rite of the Mass is a complex combination of giving and receiving, in which the human subject remains identifiable even when incorporated. We need not become "not selves" in order to receive the body and blood of Jesus Christ, nor can we remain simply "ourselves," unchanged and unaltered. (The Neoplatonic note is struck.) Christian liturgical practice assumes that we can be ourselves *and* be enrolled in the drama of redemption. We can participate, without either abandoning our identities or guarding them against divine dominion. The glue that holds us together, our identity as discrete individuals with personal projects, is the same glue that

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holds us together as a community in common worship. The one intensifies rather than diminishes the other.

This element of liturgy as participation in a divine community has a political and social analogue. Since nothing exists outside the embrace of divine providence, the Christian vision necessarily gathers up all of human life into its analysis, looking toward a transformed way of living. As Milbank details so effectively in *Theology and Social Theory,* modern attempts to designate a social reality underneath or outside our participation in God's consummating revelation in Christ rest in a primal violence. Renunciation—"*This* God shall not have!"—marks all efforts to disentangle "real social analysis" from theology. Because God gives Himself to us, this renunciation must always take the form of resistance. To build our earthly city, to identify a "natural human being" on which to base moral and political analysis, we must deform and destroy our actual humanity, which has been created for citizenship in the heavenly city.

Against these efforts to carve out a place free from divine purpose—"the secular"—Milbank argues for a conception of social reality governed by the supernatural vocation of fellowship with God. Nothing exists outside it, yet this vocation vindicates and fulfills rather than corrupts our condition as natural, rational, and social beings. Our identity in embodied existence, rational discourse, and corporate life is the same as our identity before God. The one reinforces rather than weakens the other.

This ambition to see all creation as matter for redemption explains Radical Orthodoxy's self-designation as "Augustinian." The proponents of Radical Orthodoxy do not simply use the heavenly city as a gesture by which to escape from the dead-ends of postmodernism. They want to substitute a Christian and participatory account of the glue that holds the world together for the postmodern and violent one. Only then can theology escape the gravitational pull of the postmodern commitment to power and violence. Once Radical Orthodoxy escapes, under the guidance of a metaphysics of participation, its proponents can show how the diverse features of human life find fulfillment in God's consummating purposes. The way is open to recover and reconstitute a comprehensive Christian vision.

One of the tragedies of modern theology has been its systematic renunciation of this ambition. The deep end of "truth" has been ceded to science, while theology swims in the shallow end of "meaning." Aesthetic expression has been relinquished to the cult of original self-expression and "what-it-means-for-me." Morality becomes a subset of utility, or a creation of private conscience, and Christians are reduced to "sharing their values." An impoverished realm of "spirituality" or "transcendence" remains the rightful property of Christian reflection, and running on these slight fumes, theology drives toward relevance in a world over which it has renounced its authority. Radical Orthodoxy is nothing if not intensely opposed to this renunciation; for its adherents the whole world is fit for absorption into a theological framework. Christian theology should shape the way we talk about everything.

Scope, however, is not the only Augustinian ambition lost in modern theology. For every metaphysical, historical, and anthropological adventure of speculation, Augustine devoted even more energy to affirming and defending the irreducible *particularity* of divine redemption in Christ. The scope may be wide, but the center is focused, and the pull of the gravity of Christ is profoundly strong. The world is participatory, true enough, but its participatory framework is Christ-formed. The proponents of Radical Orthodoxy embrace the universal scope of Augustinian ambition—how Christ's redemptive purpose structures the natural world, history, human desire, and truth itself. Like so many modern theologians, however, they often express a deep ambivalence about its concrete particularity and the authority it exerts over the Christian life. To this ambivalence we must turn.

Time and again, Radical Orthodoxy blocks any center of gravity from acquiring weight sufficient to control or direct our participation in God. Milbank, for example, when he engages the biblical text, consistently translates the particular sense into a conceptual or speculative process. The Gospel stories are, for him, allegories of a participatory metaphysics. As we grasp this theoretical truth, we come to see how we are "cocreators" of revelatory meaning. Our "analogizing capacity is itself 'like God'"; rather than being addressed by God, "we have to discover the content of the infinite through labor and creative effort."

The same implicit repudiation of authoritative particularity occurs when Milbank identifies the Church as a process rather than as a tradition of first-order language and practice. The Church is, at root, "a new social body which can transgress every human boundary, and adopts no law in addition to that of 'life' . . . [and] is attendant upon a diverse yet harmonious, mutually reconciling community." Whether the focus rests on Scripture, creed, or tradition, a certain "ideality" seems to govern, a tendency to think, theologically, in terms of higher, purified, and untainted forms. A formal claim, a "way of

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being," supersedes the determinate particularity of apostolic teaching and practice.

Milbank's struggle with the doctrine of the atonement illustrates this tendency more precisely. In *Theology and Social Theory*, he provides a determinedly conceptual reading of the redemptive significance of Jesus. "After Jesus' death our redemption becomes possible, for two reasons," Milbank reports. "First, we speculatively grasp that sin is negation, arbitrary violence, the refusal of pure love itself, and this speculation is an *indispensable* and yet independent moment of faith." The second element is an equally postmodern combination of theory and rhetoric. "The speculation is only occasioned," observes Milbank, "by the horrifying and sublime compulsion of Jesus' death, whose concrete circumstance makes us feel that here we really 'see' sin, and at the same time the essence of human goodness." Jesus makes possible a reflective pattern, and his life is redemptive because the determinate features of his life stimulate us to "speculatively grasp" that pattern. Only in this "speculative grasp" do we come to inhabit "the idiom, the *logos* of adequate return," and through our adoption of this "idiom," through our "speculative grasp" and consequent new way of thinking and living, *we* make atonement universal.

The "speculative grasp" suggests a general tendency, in Radical Orthodoxy, to substitute the creative production of theological theory for the redemptive power of Christ. In "The Name of Jesus," an essay interpreting canonical writings on Jesus' saving power, Milbank explicitly turns from person to process, from the identity of Jesus to an ideality created by his absence. Milbank begins this essay by reading the Gospel stories as internally divided. On the one hand, Jesus is the man who proclaims the coming kingdom of God. On the other hand, we encounter what Milbank calls a "metanarrative" that concentrates on the sacrificial economy of Jesus' rejection, suffering, and death. Viewed carnally, the narrative simply fails, as the two elements conflict with each other, leaving Jesus dispersed between the narrative and "metanarrative," between the historical and the cultic.

But Milbank does not read carnally. He reads spiritually, speculatively. Far from being a failure, the dispersal of Jesus' identity is the key to salvation. The inability of the text to identify Jesus opens up space for reconstituted human community. The absence of a savior in the text creates the need for us to construct a savior in and through our own interpretive practice. This allows, then, for participatory atonement: the ecclesial practice of unending exegetical openness, in which the Church produces a savior in and through its interpretive creativity. In this way, Jesus saves as the "founder of a practice/state of being," and thus the ecclesial process "must be God Himself." In his contribution to the *Radical Orthodoxy* collection, Graham Ward develops a view similar to Milbank's, in which Jesus' "displaced body" renders him absent, opening up space for "a participation in and through difference that enables a co-creativity."

What is going on here? Radical Orthodoxy is very clear: it wishes to renounce the compromises and half-measures of modern theology and recover an Augustinian boldness on behalf of Christian faith and practice. Yet Milbank's attempts to explain our participation in Christ's redemptive power are easily folded back into modern theology. A passing acquaintance with standard modern views allows us to see that the "poetic atonement" effected "by the horrifying and sublime compulsion of Jesus' death" echoes Kant's account of Jesus' redemptive significance. Milbank's "speculative grasp" may spin with a theoretical rotation, but the relation of Christ to believer differs hardly at all from Kant's account of the rational will, aroused by Jesus, who is the sensuous manifestation of the archetype of moral rectitude. Furthermore, Milbank's "atonement by absence" mirrors Hegel's dialectic; in both, the identity of Christ is lost, only to be recovered in the ongoing career of Spirit. To be sure, Milbank's "speculative grasp" is linguistic and enacted, and not conceptual in the old-fashioned and purely intellectual way. Nonetheless, for Milbank, the purported failure of Scripture to render Jesus present, as an identifiable person, is the key to its success. Jesus' absence allows for unending interpretive potency and the "blending of differences" that characterizes the salvific process.

This easy plotting of Milbank's accounts of atonement onto these two seminal modern thinkers is crucial. Both the Kantian and Hegelian views of Jesus' saving role lead to two important consequences. First, the fulfillment of a human possibility—the turn to righteousness (for Kant) and the development of culture (for Hegel)—becomes the true source of redemption. In the wake of this turn to a human source, modernity and postmodernity turn toward power: as we lose confidence in a single voice of conscience or a universal cultural teleology, my conscience wars against yours, and we fight for control of the cultural process. The other consequence of Kantian and Hegelian soteriology also encourages the alienation from scriptural authority and rejection of the binding constraints of apostolic practice so common to modern theology. Kantian rectitude or Hegelian history of Spirit supersedes the apostolic language and practice as the font of theological

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truth, just as they surpass the incarnate form of Jesus by completing and perfecting his redemptive potency. The potency of moral choice (Kant) or the reflection upon the dynamics of history (Hegel) eclipses the identity of Christ, after which the violence of modernity and postmodernity comes into its own. Generation after generation of biblical critics and liberal theologians try to pierce the literal sense of Scripture in order to wrest its meaning from inherited orthodoxy and ecclesiastical authority.

The "new theology" proposed by Radical Orthodoxy repeats these patterns of modern theology, with similar consequences. The articles of Milbank, Ward, et al. have the effect of obscuring and superseding the particular identity of Jesus Christ as the mediator of salvation. As a consequence, they demonstrate an overall ambivalence about the role of Scripture, creed, and inherited ecclesial practice that moves in a modernist direction. Authority shifts out of the particularity of word and sacrament into a supervening theory or concept. To be sure, the theory or concept is a practice, an inhabited language, rather than a static idea. Nonetheless, however modified with appropriate postmodern twists and turns, the "speculative grasp" that lives in the generative practices of "reconciling differences" is more perspicuous, more redemptively potent, than the particular form of Christ present in word and sacrament. "New Being" replaces the crucified and risen Lord as the glue that holds all things together.

How could this collapse into modern theology happen? The usual explanation is straightforward. The proverbial educated believer cannot reconcile the pieties of his childhood with the critical methods and realities of modern life. Science seems to require a thoroughgoing materialism, transforming spiritual concerns into echoes of social practices, reflections of psychic needs, or simple glandular oddities. Historical inquiry inculcates a skeptical temper at odds with the accepting embrace of faith. Ideals of personal autonomy conflict with traditional patterns of religious conformity and obedience. For modern theology, the job of the theologian is to demonstrate that modern methods and realities do not really conflict with Christianity, properly understood. In short, the modern theologian must "mediate," must show how the educated believer can inhabit both worlds, religious and secular, without loss, without divided loyalty.

Radical Orthodoxy's slide toward the standard moves of modern theology cannot be explained in this usual way. Its relentless critiques of modernity and postmodernity block any such strategy of mediation. Milbank & Co. want to replace the presumptions of secularity with a Christian account of everything: no correlation here. What, then, should we think? Radical Orthodoxy remains loosely put together, defined by strong intuitions and theological thought experiments and lacking a systematic gestalt. The essays collected in the *Radical Orthodoxy* volume, for example, range widely, both in tone and topic, combining both Roman Catholic and Anglican authors who evidence divergent sensibilities, making generalizations about it dangerous. Yet I can offer a nonstandard account of the allergy to the particular that makes Radical Orthodoxy so paradigmatically modern when handling such crucial theological questions as atonement. It is an explanation that should caution us about the dangers and difficulties of a *radical* orthodoxy of any sort.

The three leading figures of Radical Orthodoxy, Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, are Anglican, deeply influenced by the piety and practice of Anglo-Catholicism, and this encourages them to replace particularity with theory, identity with ideality. Let me explain. Anglo-Catholicism was born out of profound dissatisfaction with modern Anglicanism, and for complex cultural and theological reasons, this dissatisfaction could not come to rest in conversion to the Roman Catholic Church.

This put Anglo-Catholicism in a difficult position. By conviction, Anglo-Catholics were committed to tradition. Yet, by their thinking, predominant Anglican practice could not provide an adequately rich, catholic tradition, and the Roman Church, as currently constituted, could not provide an adequate institutional basis for faithfulness to the tradition. Therefore, a tradition had to be invented. Of course, this invention was denied. Anglo-Catholicism is characterized by an extensive archeology of patristic and medieval texts, endless recoveries of catholic-leaning figures in early Anglicanism, as well as extensive borrowings from post-Tridentine Roman theology and sacramental practice. Yet, however ancient the pieces, however venerable the raw material, the actual structure and form of Anglo-Catholicism emerged out of an idealized picture of catholic faith and practice. It had to turn toward the ideal, because for the actual and particular forms of Christian practice, established Anglicanism as well as Roman Catholicism were inadequate.

Radical Orthodoxy inherits this pattern of ideality. Its theoretical impulse does not serve the usual modernist purpose of finding a pivot point on which to correlate or mediate between Christ and culture. Instead, the drive toward a "speculative grasp" serves to discern the ideal form of Christian truth, to find a basis from which one can faithfully invent a tradition

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free from the limitations and imperfections of inherited forms. By their own description, the proponents of Radical Orthodoxy are "radical" in just this sense. "Re-envisioning" is required because, we are told, "Christianity has *never* sufficiently valued the mediating participatory sphere which alone can lead us to God." Just as Anglo-Catholicism could not inhabit an inherited tradition—i.e., neither Canterbury nor Rome—Radical Orthodoxy cannot take up a theological tradition, at least not directly. The Christian metaphysic must be discerned, the participatory sphere (which *alone* can lead us to God?) must be uncovered, and under its guidance, theological imagination and creative theoretical production will perfect and complete that which has been received. Thus the redemptive potency of the Christian witness is unlocked and realized.

The Anglo-Catholic heritage both highlights and explains the proximate basis for the turn to ideality, but Radical Orthodoxy does not simply reproduce a feature of Anglo-Catholicism. It manifests, with an intensified urgency, a problem facing postmodern theology in general. Because mainline Protestant churches are now liberal by tradition, orthodox theological practice becomes, of necessity, an invention, a determined culling from the past, an act of imaginative recovery. Milbank, Pickstock, and Ward, for instance, wish to recover the confident, comprehensive voice of Augustinian Neoplatonism, a theological vision bold enough to claim all aspects of life as ordered toward God. But as a painful matter of fact, over the last two centuries Anglicanism has been marked by retreat, concession, and diminished confidence. Educated at Cambridge University, in the residue of the past glories of a Christian intellectual, aesthetic, and political culture, proponents of Radical Orthodoxy find reminders of the scope of Augustinian ambition. But monuments are not living institutions, and Gothic buildings are no substitute for enduring practices. Radical Orthodoxy cannot invent the flesh and blood of a Christian culture, and so must be satisfied with describing its theoretical gestalt, gesturing, in postmodern fashion, toward that which was and might be.

In itself, this determined resistance to the retreat of the Church and the secularization of culture is noble. Radical Orthodoxy should attract the attention, and affection, of anyone committed to the power of the gospel. But in the theological practice of "re-visioning," modern assumptions reemerge. The theologian is a heroic redeemer, a visionary, a genius. Intellectual virtuosity eclipses ecclesial obedience as the key to renewal. Theology becomes creative and inventive rather than receptive and reiterative. Intensely sensible of the failures of the modern Church and its modern theology, the proponents of Radical Orthodoxy seek to render Christian truth so perspicuous, so clear and evident at the level of theory, that the nihilistic temptation of secularity will be impossible, and Radical Orthodoxy's peaceful consequences will be made plain. Here, without doubt, Milbank & Co. are driven by ambition: if the actual practice of the churches in our time fails to make the truth of the gospel potent and clear, then theologians, theoretical shepherds of the speculative grasp, shall. But this ambition is not Augustinian; it is, I would submit, a quintessentially modern ambition.

If we understand our theological vocations as in and for the Church, and if we regret and decry the vulnerability of so much of Western Christianity to the nihilistic temptations of secularity, then how can we not feel the same ambition? How can we not find ourselves in the same position as Radical Orthodoxy, wanting to "re-envision" Christianity, not to make the capitulation to "science" or "modern realities" easier, but to intensify resistance, to put backbone into the Church, to make theology *foundationally* antimodern? How can we avoid becoming Anglo-Catholics, not in substance, but in ecclesial location and theological practice: alienated from the vast body of our liberal churches, trying to find an ideality under which we can receive and pass on a faith that our churches no longer have the confidence, will, or even basic scriptural and liturgical competence to give us?

Radical Orthodoxy should serve as a warning. The drive toward a "speculative grasp" is no quirk of postmodernism, no oddity of an Anglo-Catholic legacy. It is the habit of any theology alienated from the concrete and particular shape of the contemporary Church. For generations, modern theologians felt alienated because of the apparent disjunction between the moral, intellectual, and political imperatives of "progressive thought" and the constraints of classical Christianity. The upshot was a conceptual redescription of Christianity designed to allow for a correlation and mediation across this disjunction.

Now a similar alienation seems to be forced upon *orthodox* theology by the failures of Western Christianity. Christian faith and practice no longer seem to live up to the gospel. But just as the modern alienation led to a theological abstraction from apostolic teaching, so also does an orthodox alienation now tempt us. For if, like Radical Orthodoxy, we accept this disjunction, the consequences echo modern theology. Christian faith and practice must be raised

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to a level of purified abstraction so that it can be saved from its own failure to make Christ present in the Church and in society. But as Milbank's treatment of atonement shows, such a move returns to modernist patterns and obscures the particular identity of Jesus Christ. In the end, Christ is absent, and only the high labors and creative vision of the theologian can recover his identity and make him present. His identity must be held together with the sticky glue of the "speculative grasp."

Anglicanism has no monopoly on failure. To a great extent, the magisterial Protestant churches in Europe and North America, and, to a lesser extent, Roman Catholicism, have been diminished. Those of us bitten by the Augustinian ambition cannot help but war against that diminishment. However, in our protest, we must recognize how difficult and narrow is the way of a postmodern recovery of orthodoxy.

Many offer courageous and articulate warnings against the modern "culture of death," and Christian witness does provide an alternative that has weight and substance. Nonetheless, no triumphant vision of peace emerges out of what late-twentieth-century Christians actually say and do. Christianity, its Holy Scriptures and ecclesial practice, seems unable to hold all things together. Against the weakness of the gospel—in churches that seem not to hear and in a culture increasingly blind—we are tempted by theory. We imagine that by sheer theological genius and intellectual virtuosity we can reconstruct an all-embracing Christian culture, we can uncover and make present the glue that holds everything together. But guided by what might be rather than what is, we come to correct and perfect that which we have received in word and sacrament. As the editor's blue pencil excises and adds, violence and the will-to-power reemerge. We turn to apostolic teaching and practice with an eye to improvement, correction, and enhancement. If the gospel is weak, then *we* will make it strong. Our theorizing, our "new theologies," will hold together what Christ and his Church seem unable to encompass and embrace.

Against this temptation, we must keep our noses close to the ill-smelling disaster of modern Christianity, articulate about its failures but training ourselves to dwell in enduring forms of apostolic language and practice. Diminished vision may be the price we must pay. We may no longer be able to see our culture, stem to stern, through Christian eyes. We may no longer be able to see the complex shape of our contemporary churches as a creature of the gospel. We can only see what has been given to us to see. But paying this price is necessary in order to train our eyes to see the identity of Christ in the witness of Scripture and the practice of the Church. For no matter how high we might soar in theological reflection, and despite our hope that from such heights we might recover a vision of the full scope of the truth of Christ, we will be disappointed. Christ is in the concrete faith and practice of the Church, and only he can give power and potency to a postmodern theology that is genuinely orthodox. For the Son holds all things together in the Father.

To escape the patterns of theological modernism, therefore, the first task is not to imagine and invent. Instead, we must train ourselves in that which modernity rejects most thoroughly and fatally: the discipline of receiving that which has been given. We must eat the scrolls that the Lord has given us, and dwell amidst his people. Only then will the scope of an Augustinian ambition recover the intense, concrete, and particular Christ-centered focus that gives it the power of good news. Only there can we taste God's peace. FT

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Sex and the Married Missileer

Daniel P. Moloney

At Minot Air Force base in Minot, North Dakota, a wife kisses her husband goodbye, knowing that he will be spending the night alone in close quarters with a fit, talented, professional woman officer. He will dress next to her, sleep where she slept, smell how she smells. Although their job can sometimes be tense, for the most part it is boring, and so they talk. Over several days each week, month after month, they've built up a relationship that it would be fair to call friendly. He is a devoted husband, yet he is a man, and weak as all men are weak. So as his wife kisses him goodbye, she worries, not that his hands will wander, but that his heart might, just a little bit. She wants to trust him, but it can be hard, and she fears she's growing jealous, against her will, of that colleague of her husband. She knows she is supposed to think of her as just another officer in the armed forces, but when she looks she sees, and fears her husband sees, another woman.

Minot may be small and remote, but it is the scene of something dramatic: a man's struggle to defend his faith and marriage against the cultural forces of our day. This particular mini-drama is repeated daily in the households of Air Force officers assigned to the two-person crews whose job is to maintain and, if necessary, launch the nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles stored in silos under the North Dakota soil. They do this from one of fifteen Launch Control Centers (LCC), bunkers located at least an hour away from Minot and sixty feet underground. The bunker is the shape of two Tylenol capsules stuck end to end, in its entirety and with all the electronic equipment no more than twelve yards long by five feet wide—about the length and width of a school bus. At one end there is a small sleeping area with a mattress separated by heavy curtains from the rest of the bunker. At the other end is a small toilet which, until recent suggestions from crew members prompted the addition of a door, was also separated from the bunker only by curtains.

On the surface above each bunker there is a Missile Alert Facility (MAF), basically a house with security personnel who guard the elevator down to the bunker and a chef who prepares meals for the crew. At mealtimes, somebody calls down to the LCC, letting the crew know to unlock the entrance to the facility, always giving them at least thirty minutes notice before coming down, so there are no surprises. Nobody on the staff of the MAF or even back at the base is able to monitor what is going on in the bunker, again for security reasons.

The job has its pressures, most notably the prospect of launching weapons of mass destruction. Nevertheless, most of the work is routine, and crew members have a lot of time to kill during their "alerts." They have DIRECTV, including HBO and other pay channels, and access to videos. They can bring down reading material, and although it is not permitted, some bunkers have pornographic magazines hidden in the equipment racks. But much of the time is spent shooting the breeze. The same two-person crew serves together a few times a week for an average of six to eight months consecutively. Each crew spends at least twenty-four hours underground each time they go down, but the weather in North Dakota being what it is, sometimes they are forced to wait as long as five days before a replacement crew can arrive. As one Air Force missileer put it: "Everyone is pretty friendly with each other. What do we talk about? Anything and everything. . . . You're spending twenty-four hours with this person, after all."

Since 1988, the Air Force has assigned women to serve with men on these missile crews as part of its effort to allow women officers the same career opportunities men receive. The Air Force has been at the forefront of gender integration in the military, assigning women to combat roles as fighter pilots

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while the Navy still permitted the bottom-pinching atmosphere that eventually blew up into Tailhook, and while to this day the Army does not permit male and female cadets at West Point to be alone in a room together with a closed door. Missile alert crew duty seemed another choice candidate for gender integration, requiring judgment and will, but not physical strength. At first, women served on crews only with other women, but after a time, the top brass decided to treat male and female missileers indiscriminately, scheduling them without regard to their sex. This policy went largely unquestioned until the assignment of Lieutenant Ryan Berry, a promising young airman who could not square his marriage and his Christian faith with the compromising situation in which the Air Force was placing him.

Lt. Berry graduated from West Point in June 1996, and was permitted to transfer from the Army to the Air Force, one of a handful of top graduates from the military academies allowed to switch branches of the military. He was trained to work with Minuteman ICBMs and assigned to Minot, where his father had begun his military career in the Air Force almost three decades before. In the meantime, he married his high school sweetheart Jill, and they moved into a small house on the base.

Although there was one woman in his missileer training classes, Berry did not think that women and men would be assigned to the same missile crew. "I was under the impression that once we got to the wing, since it is just a two-person workplace, isolated underground, that men would pull alerts with men and women with women," Berry later told reporters. The Air Force did not brief the missileer candidates about the particular challenges of serving on mixed-sex crews in such a unique environment—nobody even mentioned it. As soon as Berry realized the crews were mixed, he knew he had a problem.

Many male servicemen grouse about such "gender integration," seeing it as a sign of acquiescence to political correctness and a violation of common sense about human nature. But Berry's problem was deeper: as a Christian struggling to live the commandments, he must keep his heart pure and avoid even the appearance of sin so as not to scandalize others. Needless to say, adultery is a sin. So, following the ancient rabbinic principle of "building a fence around the commandments," Berry avoids situations where he is alone with a woman, thereby reducing the likelihood that his thoughts or feelings might dwell on a woman other than his wife. This does not preclude dealing with women professionally, but it does put limits on such contacts—especially with women who are unmarried—so as to protect his family from the vagaries of his own heart.

Clearly, Christian doctrine encourages such caution. Scripture is filled with instructions to avoid temptations, even to avoid occasions where one might be tempted. "If your eye is causing you to sin, pluck it out," says Matthew's Gospel, because "if a man looks at a woman with lust in his eyes, he has already committed adultery in his heart" (5:28-29). Paul warns the Corinthians to avoid occasions of sin, because "if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Berry, an educated and well-formed Catholic, realized that pulling a missile alert with a woman would make it exceedingly difficult for him to work with a pure heart, as it would for most men. He immediately consulted the Catholic chaplain on base to discuss his options.

Berry was prepared to leave the military over this crisis of conscience, his soul being a greater priority than his career. He had faced a similar decision once before, when during his training he thought missileers had to take an oath to follow any order given through the appropriate chain of command—a promise he simply could not make. (If his superior officer ordered him to launch an unprovoked attack at a city, Catholic just war doctrine would prohibit him from obeying.) After consulting with his chaplain on that issue, Berry decided he would exercise his moral agency *before* he went on duty, asking himself each day: is there any likelihood, given the known state of the world, that the President might today order an illicit nuclear attack? If he ever thought so, he would not go on duty that day, and would accept the consequences, whatever they might be. Maybe this new problem could be solved in a similar way.

And for eighteen months, it was. In accordance with Air Force procedures, Berry requested a religious accommodation so that he would be scheduled to serve on alert duty only with men. Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2706 4F, "Accommodation of Religious Practices," is "based on the constitutional right of the free exercise of religion in accordance with [Department of Defense] policy." Commanders "are expected to respect the religious beliefs and practices of Air Force members in a manner that is consistent and fair to all," and to accommodate religious practices "when accommodation will not have an adverse impact on military readiness, unit cohesion, standards, or discipline." On the advice of the Catholic chaplain at Minot, Berry's squadron commander granted the request.

Since even professional soldiers are likely to become jealous over personal accommodations, Air

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Force policy is to handle them discreetly, "at the lowest level of command." In keeping with this policy, Berry's squadron commanders discussed his accommodation only on a need-to-know basis. Regulations do not require such requests to be submitted in writing, and his squadron commanders did not ask for it. For the most part, this meant that besides the chaplain, only the person scheduling the crews knew that Berry was being treated differently. Scheduling accommodations of various sorts are not uncommon—two married officers at Minot, for example, were given permission to be scheduled always on the same days to maximize their time off together—and it did not raise eyebrows that Berry was never scheduled with a woman, since the great majority of the missileers at Minot, over 90 percent, are men.

So Berry served crew duty with men from his arrival at Minot in May 1997 until March 1998, at which time he was promoted to instructor and transferred to another squadron. His new commander continued the religious accommodation until he was replaced in May 1998. His successor, Lt. Colonel David Blalock, continued the policy of previous squadron commanders.

In the meantime, however, certain women officers began to suspect that Berry's refusal to pull alert duty with women was grounded in sexism, and began to say as much to the senior officers at the base. The grumbling became more public when a newly assigned scheduler mistakenly assigned Berry to serve with a woman, and then changed it when he was informed of the policy. Schedule changes are posted publicly, so all the missileers knew about the change. Not knowing the truth, they believed the rumors.

To complicate matters, the higher leadership at Minot had changed. Berry's first squadron commander had talked informally with many officials on the base before granting the initial accommodation. But after that decision, the subsequent squadron commanders never discussed the policy with anyone outside Berry's squadron. This meant that with the change in leadership, the new group commander, Col. Stephen Cullen, was not informed of Berry's accommodation until he began to investigate the complaints.

Although the squadron commanders below him were following the appropriate policy, Col. Cullen was irritated at having been left out of the loop. In late November 1998, while Berry was out of town on leave, he called a meeting to discuss the lieutenant's alleged preferential treatment. Although the Catholic chaplain and the head chaplain at Minot supported Berry's accommodation, the equal opportunity officer and the base lawyer ultimately persuaded Cullen that the accommodation should not be continued. When he returned on December 8, Berry was summoned to the colonel's office and presented with a memo revoking his religious accommodation and informing him that any further refusal to serve with women would result in disciplinary action. Berry protested. Sure that he could persuade them he was no sexist, he requested the opportunity to speak with those who complained. The colonel dismissed this suggestion. Berry asked to be reassigned to some other duty within the wing, or retrained and assigned to another career field. Both requests were rejected as well.

The next day Berry met with Lt. Col. Blalock and described his meeting with Cullen. Blalock decided that given Berry's state of mind (in addition to all this, his wife was nine months pregnant) he should not go on his next alert, which was scheduled to be with a woman. (Such suspensions are not punitive and do not go on one's record, to encourage crew members to speak frankly with their commanders when personal issues might distract them from their sensitive duties.) After a month of temporary suspensions, Blalock decided to recommend that Berry be suspended from nuclear alerts permanently, reasoning that without the religious accommodation, Berry would always face a conflict between his faith and his military duty. Berry expected that given his exemplary record he would be retrained for another field or, at worst, given an honorable discharge. That was January 8, 1999.

In early February, notice of Berry's permanent suspension reached the ranking officer at the base, Col. Ronald Haeckel, who began an inquiry as to whether Berry's interpretation of Catholic morality was in fact official Church teaching. He called the command chaplain for Air Force Space Command, Col. Charles Baldwin, who in turn called Major General William Dendinger, Chief of Chaplain Service and a Roman Catholic priest, who declared that nothing in Catholic doctrine prohibited Berry from serving with women. Based on this judgment of Catholic teaching, Chaplain Baldwin (a Protestant) wrote a memo concluding that Berry's refusal to serve with women was "based on his personal understanding of the biblical directives, and not based on Catholic doctrine."

With this memo in hand, Col. Haeckel called a meeting with Berry, Blalock, and Cullen to discuss the situation before agreeing to Berry's permanent suspension. On the basis of Baldwin's memo, Haeckel and Cullen accused Berry of causing all this trouble on behalf of his own personal beliefs rather than

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official Church teaching, and gave him six weeks to "reconcile [his] faith with [his] military duties." When at the end of that time Berry told them he had not changed his religious beliefs, it seems they resolved to make an example of him.

On Berry's annual Officer Performance Report (OPR), signed several days later, Haeckel overrode the glowing reports of Berry's immediate superiors. Although Berry had "superb technical expertise" according to Haeckel's assessment, he "refused to accept the personal responsibilities of a missile combat crew member." Haeckel's report alleged that Berry "had [the] daily alert schedule altered" and had refused to "perform duties with fully qualified female crew members." Neither claim was strictly true. Berry did have the alert schedule altered, but only by going through the proper channels, which is not grounds for a negative rating. Likewise, while Berry had expressed his objections to serving on an alert crew with women, he had never been ordered to do so, and thus was never even in a position to have refused his official duties.

Haeckel also criticized Berry because his religious accommodation "adversely impacted good order, discipline, and morale of both male and female ICBM operators" (a reference to AFI 36-2706 4F, mentioned above). Again the charges have a grain of truth but fall apart under scrutiny. Jealousy and rumors are a foreseeable result of any religious accommodation; the superior officer has a duty to explain the accommodation to those who might resent it initially. On Haeckel's interpretation, however, any commander should automatically deny even a reasonable request for religious accommodation if he fears someone in his command might react irrationally or unprofessionally. This approach would make accommodations virtually impossible, and would in effect gut Air Force policies defending religious freedom. In Berry's case, the commanding officers not only failed in this duty, they *exacerbated* the tensions his request had stirred up and denied him any chance to alleviate his colleagues' concerns.

Haeckel's report apparently was thrown together quickly—it contained several factual errors and lacked the documentation required by the Air Force to substantiate such criticisms. It had the desired effect nonetheless: Berry's career was effectively over. Almost every Air Force lieutenant with a clean record gets promoted to captain. Berry—whose superiors call him "highly capable," "knowledgeable," "a cool performer under pressure," full of "boundless potential," "one of my best," "ready for even greater challenges"—rightly expected the automatic promotion to captain, and the chance for the further, more competitive promotion to major. West Point, his family, and his performance at Minot had all prepared him for military leadership, which is closed off to those with black marks on their records.

Berry's only hope was to appeal his report to Major General Thomas Neary, Commander of the 20th Air Force, beginning the most surreal episode of the whole case. Berry believed, with good reason, that the basis of his suspension was Monsignor Dendinger's confusion about Catholic moral teaching. Therefore, he thought, if he could provide Gen. Neary with a truly authoritative presentation of the doctrine, he could at least have the negative OPR removed from his record. Through a mutual friend, Berry sought the help of Monsignor William Smith of New York's St. Joseph Seminary, a respected Catholic moral theologian, who reviewed the entire case and wrote a letter in support of the lieutenant's position.

According to Msgr. Smith, "occasions of sin" are situations or actions that are conducive to, or temptations toward, sin: being in a bookstore for an impecunious bibliophile, being around an irresponsible yet charismatic friend, or going to a strip bar, for example. Some situations are wrong for everybody (e.g., the strip bar); these are traditionally called *absolute occasions of sin.* Some situations are wrong only for a certain person with a certain proclivity (the bibliophile in the bookstore); these are called *relative occasions of sin.* Missile alert crew duty with someone of the opposite sex, in Smith's judgment, would be "closer to the absolute occasion rather than the relative one." "Such an arrangement for twenty-four or forty-eight continuous hours seems to me to offend common sense, even basic Christian standards of scandal," Smith wrote, because it has "the appearance of evil and is likely to be a stumbling block for others."

Seconding Msgr. Smith was Archbishop Edwin O'Brien of the Catholic Archdiocese for Military Services, who wrote his own letter to Gen. Neary: "I fully concur with Monsignor Smith's conclusions and I support Lt. Berry's request for religious accommodation in the matter."

On June 2, one month later, Neary, himself a Roman Catholic, responded to the archbishop's letter. He made three points: 1) The officers trained for ICBM crew duty are such professionals that they can "responsibly address and resolve any perceived temptation . . . through obedience—both to one's personal beliefs and to the professional commitments and standards expected of all Air Force officers." 2) Since the professionalism of the ICBM crews is such that each member would out of obedience respect the privacy of the other, serving on a

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mixed-gender crew could not be an occasion of sin nor cause of scandal. 3) Bracketing any moral considerations Msgr. Smith might raise, "if any officer refuses to perform gender-integrated alert duties, it would undermine the great progress we have made in the gender equity area."

Archbishops are not used to being told quite so bluntly that they misunderstand Catholic doctrine. O'Brien sent a letter to Neary on June 23, insisting that Chaplain Baldwin retract his statement that Berry's conviction was not based on Catholic doctrine. "Nothing could be further from the truth," wrote the archbishop. "I am sure that highly trained and well disciplined Air Force officers do resist temptations, for the most part. The question for me as a moralist is, Are there some programs whose highly unusual moral contexts would render it unfair to require participation?" Archbishop O'Brien also dismissed Neary's slippery-slope argument that giving in on mixed crews would "undermine the great progress . . . in the gender equity area." Gender equity among the troops, he insisted, was not as important as their adherence to the commandments prohibiting lust and adultery.

When it became clear that the Air Force would not reconsider its hardline stance against him, Berry went public with his story. On July 14, Rowan Scarborough broke the story on page one of the *Washington Times*. It caught the attention of Capitol Hill, at least in part because of a series of news stories regarding religion and the military: in just the previous two weeks, the Marines had decided to allow Wiccans to practice their faith on military installations and the Navy had kicked the Knights of Columbus off their base in Norfolk, Virginia, because they were too sectarian and did not admit women. Just a few days before, the Army, Navy, and Air Force had all announced that they were having trouble getting recruits and would be requesting an additional $20 million for their recruiting budget.

Rep. Roscoe Bartlett of Maryland used the Berry case to tie it all together: the military was adopting the leftist policies of the cultural elite, he said, in the process driving away proven soldiers and potential recruits. Bartlett along with seventy-seven Representatives of both parties (and both sexes)—including Floyd Spence, the chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and most of the House leadership—sent a letter to Major General Michael Ryan, the Air Force Chief of Staff, asking him to grant Berry's accommodation.

The results were mixed. Gen. Ryan did order that Berry be reassigned to a new base and retrained. But he did not remove the negative evaluation from Berry's record, saying he supported the conclusions of Berry's immediate superiors that Berry's "personal convictions could not be accommodated without creating an unacceptable impact on the unit's ability to accomplish the military mission." In the media circus that followed the *Washington Times* story, Air Force representatives repeatedly employed this line. For instance, Chief Chaplain Dendinger in a statement to the press said: "Lt. Berry's case is not a matter of accommodating a specific religious practice but accommodation of his personal religious conviction." Col. Evan Hoapili, the commander of Berry's Operations Group, in a briefing to junior officers on how to talk to the press, explained the ramifications of such merely personal conviction: "You can have personal religious convictions, but if these conflict with Air Force policy, be prepared to be kicked out."

In one sense the military chaplains are certainly correct: nothing in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* specifically prohibits unmarried men and women from serving missile alert duty together. The conflict is rather with the *principles* of Catholic moral teaching, not some specific injunction. Among the several principles this policy violates is the principle of freedom of conscience set forth by the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Liberty: that "within due limits," nobody is to be forced to act against his convictions, nor be restrained from acting in accord with his convictions, "in private or in public, alone or in associations with others." If the Air Force were without serious military reason to require Berry to act against his conscience, it would clearly be in conflict with the teaching of the Catholic Church, quite apart from other concerns about adultery, interior dispositions, modesty, scandal, and so on.

John Cardinal O'Connor, Archbishop of New York, who spent twenty-seven years as a chaplain in the Navy and Marine Corps and was the Senior Chaplain of the U.S. Naval Academy before becoming archbishop of the military archdiocese, wrote two outraged columns in *Catholic New York*: "This is not the military I knew in uniform, nor the military I knew as bishop for all the armed forces." O'Connor argued that the Air Force's legitimate concern for "good order and discipline," in Chaplain Dendinger's words, could not be sustained unless the Air Force was also concerned about the moral character of its airmen. The twentieth century has seen too many soldiers put military success ahead of any higher moral purpose, noted the cardinal. "I would shudder for our country and certainly our armed forces" if the same reordering of values occurred here.

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The Air Force's stubbornness in the Berry case may be explained in part as a reaction to the earlier—even more famous—sexual scandal at Minot over Kelly Flinn, the Air Force pilot who in 1997 carried on an adulterous affair with the civilian husband of a female soldier under her command. On that occasion the Air Force handled the media poorly, and in the end was intimidated by public pressure into letting Flinn off with a slap on the wrist. In the Berry affair, by contrast, the Air Force decided to play hardball. Senior officers searched for soldiers who would disagree with Berry or would present a different picture of missile crew life than Berry had. To this end, Col. Hoapili met with junior officers on July 17, briefing them on what to say when speaking to the press, and the next day Col. Haeckel did the same. They encouraged the junior officers to present Berry as a divisive presence in the unit, and they implied among other things that Berry was a sexist, a religious kook, an unstable personality, even a potential rapist.

Untroubled by logic, Haeckel announced, "There is absolutely no difference between Berry not wanting to serve with females in the capsule and Berry not wanting to serve with blacks." And Hoapili cynically observed, "Berry says that this is a Catholic belief, but everyone knows that you can get five bishops in a room and they will give you five different opinions on any issue." The briefing offended many of the officers present; several of them contacted Berry or his lawyer to prepare them for what was coming.

The briefings and "talking points" had their effect. Officers filled the letters pages of the *Air Force Times* with statements accusing Berry of sexism or insinuating that he was pathological: "Women and men should not be subject to sexual harassment even when it is described as religious belief"; "This is more about a perceived inability to control one's individual urges than it is about religious expression"; "What's next, a person decides he or she can't work around someone of a different race because it might invoke violent feelings that violate his or her religious faith?"; "It is ludicrous that . . . Berry was allowed to not serve crew duty with perfectly capable and fully trained missileers just because of their sex"; "The last time I looked, adultery was punishable in the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Thinking of committing a crime, sir?"

Outside the Air Force, others unsympathetic to Berry followed the same tack. The New York chapter of NOW criticized Cardinal O'Connor for "condoning sexism, and expressing the same attitudes used by those who in the past had condoned racism and sexual violence against women." NOW-NYC President Galen Sherwin told the press, "Historically, opponents of women's equality have justified excluding women from areas traditionally reserved for men with an appeal to men's inabilities to control their sexual impulses." Ellen Goodman was on message but wittier, encouraging Berry to "Make Love, Not War."

Gen. Neary inserted into Berry's file the confidential admission Berry made to Lt. Col. Blaylock that, were he assigned to a crew with a woman, his mind would not be entirely on his job. As we saw above, it is Air Force policy to keep such conversations off the record so that missileers will speak freely about potential distractions. But soon a spokeswoman for Minot Air Force Base justified Berry's decertification to the *New York Post* by appealing to this ostensibly confidential admission: "The leadership . . . decided that we can't have leaders down in the capsules with anything on their minds other than the missiles. . . . [Missile crew duty] requires a tremendous amount of professionalism."

Of course, Berry did have some supporters in the media. The *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Post*, *New American*, and *Washington Times* all ran editorials supporting him. Paul Craig Roberts and Phyllis Schlafly wrote columns in his defense, as did Terence Jeffrey of *Human Events*. The National Association of Evangelicals wrote in their newsletter, "This is not just an attack upon Roman Catholic teaching. It is only one more action in a series of moves to intimidate and suppress 'politically incorrect' religious belief and practice, and we, as Evangelicals, stand with our Roman Catholic brothers and sisters in calling for redress." Even the *Air Force Times*, which was otherwise critical of Berry, admitted in an editorial that he did not deserve the negative performance rating: "It is not Berry's fault that previous commanders told him he essentially had the right to pick his workmates."

Despite having a few supporters in high places, Berry's case remained problematic. In an era where religion is widely regarded as a purely private affair, few people want to make public concessions to religious conviction. When public life was more informed by religious values, the guardians of public morality would through laws and public opinion discourage men and women from putting themselves in such delicate situations. Today's guardians *demand* it in the name of equality. Even in a post-Lewinsky world, more aware than ever of the weaknesses of man's will, we still as a culture think it possible to remain pure of thought when temptation abounds, to look and look, but never think to touch. A nation

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of impulse buyers and divorcees, we still imagine that all it takes to sustain a marriage is an act of will and the strength to resist temptations.

It is a doctrine among some of our cultural elites that the human will is strong and infallible. Among such people, Berry's admission of his fallen nature is a sign of his inadequacy. A man who has withstood threats, demotion, and ridicule for his countercultural stance is deemed a moral weakling who could not control his sexual impulses. Traditional Christianity and Judaism, by contrast, are more realistic about human weakness—and, not coincidentally, more tolerant and forgiving. They recognize the need to struggle against one's baser inclinations, but also to have a safeguard against those frequent occasions when our fallen natures get the better of us.

Lt. Berry has chosen to live according to such religious wisdom, and he is paying for it. Were his colleagues and superiors to engage in the same quality of soul-searching, one imagines, it would be the end of gender-integrated missile assignments, and, presumably, the vindication of Lt. Ryan Berry. FT

Marriage Anagram

We met—the traces of Thanksgiving prayer
Incarnadined our lips—and stared; and each,
Like mirrored mirrors, dared to ask, beseech
"Lord, can this be?" hope mingling with despair;
Yet spoke of mundane things; feigned unaware
Of half-hid adumbrations in our speech,
Unsure in distance moving how to reach
More closeness still. Oh, Laurel, let us share
A life together, let us bear and build,
Rejoice, recline united, you and I.
Repairer of my life, completing soul,
You are my harried hope at last fulfilled.
May God grant us the grace to link and tie
Each other, make our unjoined halves our whole.

Eric Chevlen

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Books In Review

Overcoming the Scandal of the Christian Mind

HOW NOW SHALL WE LIVE? By CHARLES COLSON and NANCY PEARCEY. *Tyndale. 580 pp. $22.99.*

***Reviewed by* J. Budziszewski**

IN 1993, WHEN *Washington Post* writer Michael Weisskopf issued his notorious declaration that evangelicals are "largely poor, uneducated, and easy to command," conservative Protestant intellectuals were quick to call his bluff. Yet only a year later, when historian Mark Noll, himself a conservative Protestant, published a book called *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, it was widely greeted by his coreligionists not with cries of "Scoundrel!" and "Traitor!" but the murmur, "Alas, 'tis true."

Both reactions were correct. In general, evangelicals are neither stupid, backward, nor ignorant. But there is something wrong with the historical development of the evangelical mind, something that the best evangelical minds are the first to acknowledge. It is a theological defect: not exactly an error, but a lopsidedness, a prodigious development of one divine gift coupled with the atrophy of another. The prodigy is our devotion to "special revelation," which God has particularly disclosed to believers in His word. The atrophy is our near ignorance of "general revelation," which He has promiscuously divulged to mankind in the very order of His creation. We know a great deal about saving grace, but next to nothing—though it is one of our doctrines—about common grace.

This lopsidedness has two crippling consequences. It hinders us not only in explaining divine truth to people who are unimpressed by Scripture, but in applying it to matters that Scripture does not explicitly address. Perhaps I am sensitive to the problem because I spend time around college students, who are a cultural magnifying glass. Surrounded by neopagans, young evangelicals have no idea how to translate biblical concepts into language that friends and hostile teachers can understand. Worse, there are whole continents of life in which their faith does not function at all. The cables just haven't been connected. A bright, Bible-minded student may be able to discourse learnedly about what Paul said to the Ephesians, but if you ask him to explain what the triune God has to do with his intended profession of biochemistry, engineering, or commercial law, he comes to a dead stop. None of those things are in his Bible's concordance.

THE AMBITION OF Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey is to do something about this lopsidedness, to strike a blow against the scandal of the evangelical mind—in fact against the scandal of the *Christian* mind, for they see non-Protestants as equally far of the mark, though presumably for different reasons. And so they write:

> The Church's singular failure in recent decades has been the failure to see Christianity as a life system, or worldview, that governs every area of existence. . . . [W]e cannot answer the questions our children bring home from school, so we are incapable of preparing them to meet the challenges they face. . . . We cannot explain to our friends and neighbors why we believe, and we often cannot defend our faith. And we do not know how to organize our lives correctly.

Their goal, then, is to integrate saving grace with common grace, to fuse special revelation with general, to regain a prospect of "the sovereignty of the triune God over the whole cosmos, in all its spheres and kingdoms, visible and invisible"—for they insist that "the entire cosmos can be understood only in relation to God."

That's a tall order, and to make it taller, they want to do these things in a way that ordinary people can understand. That conservative Christians are "uneducated" is a canard, but that not all of them are theologians is simply fact. Colson and Pearcey are not so much trying to light a fire under Christian scholars (although that would please them) as to contribute something to the overall renovation of Christian culture—right down to the people in the pews. To this tall task, they bring an unusual combination of talents.

Colson is a remarkable innovator. A former Nixon aide, he pleaded guilty to charges arising from Watergate. Converted shortly afterward to Christ, he served out his appointed time, then founded the celebrated international ministry Prison Fellowship (along with its subsidiaries Justice Fellowship, Neighbors Who Care, and Wilberforce Forum). He is equally well-known through his many books and his daily *BreakPoint* radio broadcasts. Readers of FIRST THINGS know Colson as one of the original contributors to "The End of Democracy?" symposium, and as co-convener, with Father Richard John Neuhaus, of the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" discussions.

Pearcey, a razor-sharp Christian

J. BUDZISZEWSKI *is Associate Professor of Government and Philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin and author of* The Revenge of Conscience: Politics and the Fall of Man *(Spence, 1999).*

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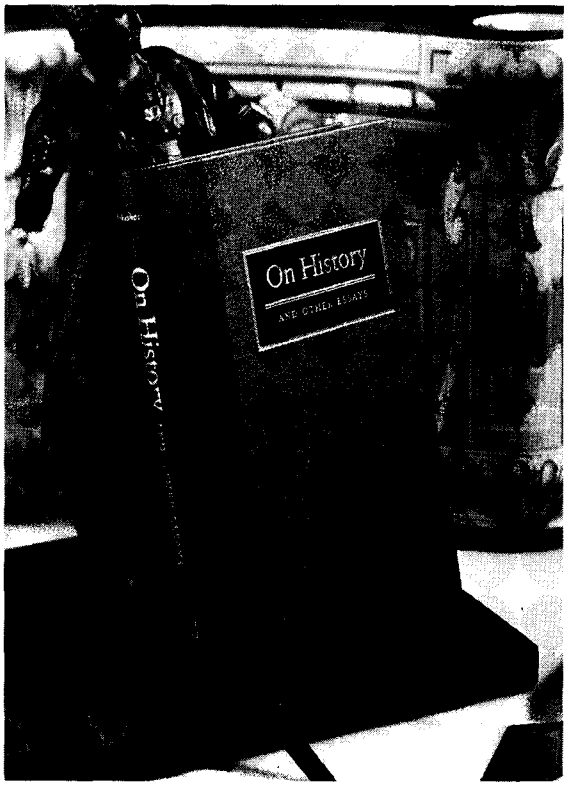
ON HISTORY AND OTHER ESSAYS

By Michael Oakeshott
Foreword by Timothy Fuller

In five essays, including three on historiography, one of the greatest minds in English political thought in the twentieth century explores themes central to the human experience: the nature of history, the rule of law, and the quest for power that is intrinsic to the human condition. Michael Oakeshott believed, as Timothy Fuller observes, that "the historian's effort to understand the past without ulterior motive [is the] effort which distinguishes the historian as historian from all who examine the past for the guidance they expect it to provide about practical concerns." The essays on history are "Present, Future, and Past," "Historical Events: The fortuitous, the causal, the similar, the correlative, the analogous, and the contingent," and "Historical Change: Identity and continuity." In "The Rule of Law," Oakeshott takes the expression to mean a particular kind of ideal human relationship. In "The Tower of Babel"—in one of two essays he wrote by the same title and on the same subject—Oakeshott discusses the various versions in which the Bible story has been told and the different circumstances which it has been used to illuminate. ***On History*** was originally published in 1983.



Michael Oakeshott (1901–1990) was Professor of Political Science at the London School of Economics and a Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. He was the author of many works, including ***Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays*** and ***Hobbes on Civil Association***, both published by Liberty Fund.

Timothy Fuller is Dean of Colorado College and has published widely on the works of Michael Oakeshott.

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intellectual who first studied at L'Abri under Francis Schaeffer, is an equally prolific writer. Coauthor, with Charles Thaxton, of *The Soul of Science: Christian Faith and Natural Philosophy*, she has contributed to numerous other books and journals, including FIRST THINGS. A fellow of the Discovery Institute's Center for the Renewal of Science and Culture, and managing editor of the journal *Origins and Design*, she is a longtime collaborator with Colson in *BreakPoint*, in a monthly column in *Christianity Today*, and in Wilberforce Forum, for which she directs policy. (By the way, although marketed on the "superstar" model that dominates evangelical publishing—itself a scandal to the evangelical mind—*How Now Shall We Live?* is a true collaboration: not "Colson with Pearcey," but "Colson and Pearcey.")

THOUGH UNFOLDED OVER nearly 600 pages, the basic strategy of the book is simple. As we all know, Christianity understands the world through a story of Creation, Fall, and Redemption. At first glance this story seems completely unrelated to the other stories and philosophies by which people try to make sense of the world. Aristotle didn't believe in creation; New Agers don't believe in the fall; postmodernists don't believe in redemption. There really is a connection among those stories, but in structure, not content. Creation, fall, and redemption are the distinctively Christian answers to the three questions that face them all: 1) Who are we and where did we come from? 2) What's wrong with the world? 3) How can it be fixed?

Colson and Pearcey use these three questions as a "grid" to break up and analyze the worldviews with which Christianity is in conflict. This comparative analysis prepares them to show that no other worldview fits the structure of created reality as well. In the last part of the volume, they apply the results of their discussion to the restoration of our fast-collapsing culture.

A limitation of Colson and Pearcey's creation-fall-redemption "grid" is that by itself, it is just a set of rubrics, not a theory. It needs to be filled out. The authors realize this, and are willing to borrow stuffing from any plausible source. Of course that whets the appetite to find out their sources, and in anticipation of this curiosity, they name them up front. After Scripture, the chief influences turn out to be John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, Francis Schaeffer,

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and C. S. Lewis: Calvin, two Calvinists, and an Anglican.

Calvin, of course, gave preeminence to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. Kuyper emphasized that Christianity is a total life-and-world view, and his influence is evident on every page. Schaeffer's appearance on the list is a bit of a surprise because of his presuppositionalism (i.e., the belief that once we reach the bedrock assumptions of someone's worldview, there is nothing deeper to which we can appeal). However, he was pivotal in teaching a generation of evangelicals just what is at stake in the culture wars: not a hodgepodge of discrete issues, but a single contest on many fronts, the outcome of which will determine which of several competing worldviews will prevail.

C. S. Lewis, I think, influences Colson and Pearcey in a number of ways. First, he is the great proponent of an apologetics based on "mere" Christianity rather than this or that brand of Christianity; Colson and Pearcey criticize sectarianism, and work hard to speak in terms that will be acceptable to the broadest possible variety of Christians. Second, Lewis is a model for Christian "public" scholars because of his willingness to adapt his means to his end, writing in many styles, genres, and venues in order to get the point across.

Third, Lewis is an informal conduit for the influence of the natural law tradition. For Catholics—as well as for Protestants who have kept up contact with their Catholic past—natural law has been the principal vehicle for reflection upon general revelation. Though Calvin accepted the natural law, he did not make much of it—for fear, perhaps, of obscuring the depravity of the mind. Among most of his heirs, the tradition has languished. Some even oppose it as a de facto denial of the fall, a neo-Scholastic treason more in debt to Aristotle than to Jesus Christ. I believe that this is a misunderstanding, and the Colson and Pearcey project would have been impoverished had it enjoyed no access to this great river of thought. Lewis—who, like the authors, only rarely refers to natural law by its proper name—is in many ways its ideal missionary, not only for laypeople who have never heard of it and for scholars leery of its Scholastic form, but also for specialists who have forgotten its roots in common sense. The authors have drunk deeply from his well.

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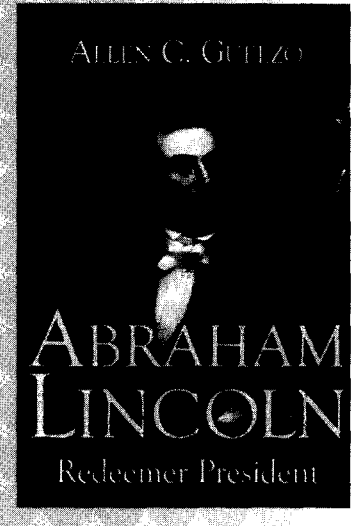

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What impresses me greatly about the book is the felicity of its popular rhetoric—its sense of audience, its wealth of illustration, and its happy marriage of anecdote, analysis, and reflection. A highly intelligent book, it is not ashamed to speak to ordinary folk. Of course it will not please those of dainty taste. The organization is loose, the stream meanders, the stories are sometimes schmaltzy. But greater writers than we could be schmaltzy when there was a reason to be, and I am not so sure that a meandering stream is less refreshing than a ship canal.

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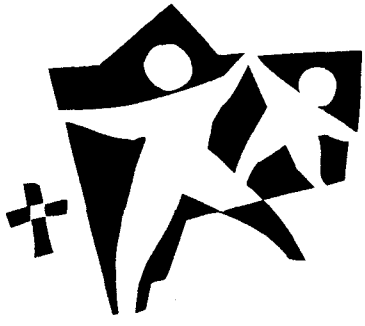

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The Great Terror

THE BLACK BOOK OF COMMUNISM: CRIMES, TERROR, REPRESSION. By STÉPHANE COURTOIS, NICOLAS WERTH, JEAN-LOUIS PANNÉ, ANDRZEJ PACZKOWSKI, KAREL BARTOSEK, and JEAN-LOUIS MARGOLIN. *Harvard University Press. 856 pp. $37.50.*

Reviewed by **Ronald Radosh**

PUBLICATION OF *The Black Book of Communism* in November 1997 in France stirred up a major political and intellectual debate, propelling this academic study of the nature of tyranny onto the best-seller list. For anyone who doubts that communism produced anything but scores of millions murdered in the service of a higher ideal, the evidence is presented here in all its ghastly detail.

Despite the book's success, some of its contributors openly dissociated themselves from the introduction and conclusion written by Stéphane Courtois. According to Nicolas Werth and Jean-Louis Margolin, Courtois went too far in his estimate of the numbers killed by all Communist regimes—over 100 million, he approximated. More importantly, Courtois crossed the line when he compared the Soviet Gulag with the Nazi Holocaust. Courtois argued that in addition to the sheer numbers of dead—and the death toll of those killed by Communists far exceeds those murdered by the Nazis—a similarity exists between the "class genocide" preached by Lenin and Stalin and the "race genocide" of Hitler. Eschewing the argument that one evil was lesser than the other, Courtois firmly asserted that both totali-

RONALD RADOSH, *Senior Research Associate at the Center for Communitarian Policy Studies, George Washington University, is co-author with Mary R. Habeck of* Spain Betrayed: The Soviet Union and the Spanish Civil War, *forthcoming from Yale University Press.*

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tarian regimes practiced "crimes against humanity" on a monumental scale.

Why, one wonders, does this judgment produce such a heated debate, even among the volume's own contributors? The answer, I think, is to be found in another important volume about communism: *The Passing of an Illusion: The Idea of Communism in the Twentieth Century*, by François Furet (see the discussion by Brian C. Anderson elsewhere in this issue). Furet, like many of the authors of *The Black Book of Communism*, was himself a former Communist. Furet argues that Stalin was able to mask the terror of the Soviet state, and indeed to widen its appeal to many in the West, by assuming the mantle of antifascism. Stalin's tactics allowed him to present himself as a defender of the bourgeois tradition he disdained. The result was that in the West, especially in Europe, Communists were able to pose, at least temporarily, as champions of liberal democracy. Communists were thus able to gather as allies not only parties of the left but also those of the center and the right. As Furet explains, "The movement to stop Hitler gave communism its most glorious moment and its militants whatever nobility illusion could allow."

For decades, the legions of Stalin's followers were able to depict themselves as fellow partisans in the good fight. Moreover, they were also able to deflect attention from the crimes committed by Stalin and his henchmen, especially since anyone who told the truth about what was taking place in the USSR was immediately branded a Fascist. Thus we had the strange spectacle of the French left erupting in anger after publication of Courtois' book, which they claimed (in a throwback to the days of the Popular Front) was a new apologia for fascism. Even today, it seems, critics of communism face stern resistance in the West.

It will be interesting, therefore, to see whether the American publication of *The Black Book of Communism* will produce any significant response. On one level, its appearance in the United States, in a translation by Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer, is of even greater importance than its European publication, for it is in the United States, ironically, that a friendly interpretation of communism has had its largest hearing. Among many intellectuals, Communists still have the reputation of having been idealistic heroes motivated by the fight against fascism. Even as new evidence reveals the extent to which the American Communist Party officially used its apparatus to recruit agents for Soviet espionage, communism's apologists respond that they meant no harm, that the gallant Soviet ally needed all the help it could get, and that, after all, the Communists supported racial equality and workers' rights.

The insistence that communism and fascism be weighed on different moral scales continues, says Martin Malia in his introduction to the American edition of *The Black Book*, because "no matter what the hard facts are, degrees of totalitarian evil will be measured as much in terms of present politics as in terms of past realities." The problem, as Malia sees it, is that "by the time of communism's fall the liberal world had had fifty years to settle into a double standard regarding its two late adversaries." Communism's collapse took place without the equivalent of a Nuremberg trial, without a de-Communization comparable to the de-Nazification that took place in postwar West Germany. Moreover, there

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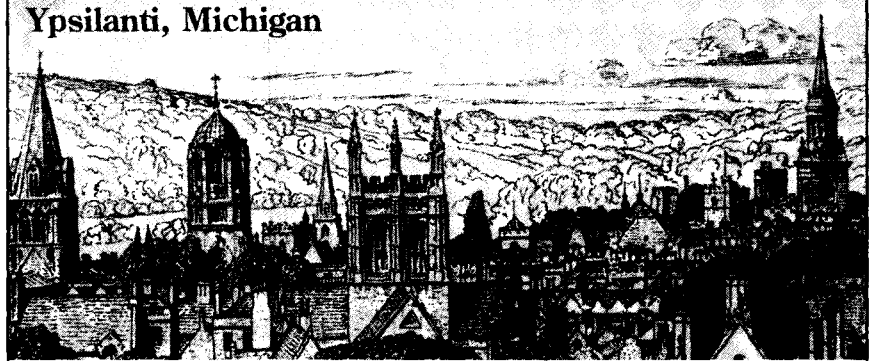

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are no museums testifying to the evils of communism, no memorials to communism's victims, and no Gulag camps maintained as reminders to new generations of the crimes committed by Communist regimes.

So it is that many people—and not just Communist apologists—blanch at the equation of Stalin's Russia with Hitler's Germany. Malia acknowledges that Nazi terror was distinctive: Hitler's genocidal policy was meant to exterminate a religious and cultural group, the Jews, as an end in and of itself. Stalin's murders, on the other hand, were undertaken against *all* groups he saw as political challenges to his power, and were therefore carried out for a political objective.

Many liberals are reluctant to attack Communists unreservedly out of a fear that doing so would "play into the hands of the right." Anti-communism, in this view, is but a variant of antiliberalism, and it tends, moreover, to legitimate reactionary regimes and movements. To many well-meaning Western liberals, therefore, it is more important to ignore or minimize the crimes of communism—they are in the past, after all—than to do anything that would aid the primary enemy on the right. In the extreme version of this position, as Malia notes, "a moral man can have 'no enemies to the left.'" From this perspective, it matters not that Communists and Fascists committed comparable crimes; what counts is that their "moral auras were antithetical." Malia responds to this view by citing the argument of East European dissidents that "mass murder in the name of a noble idea is *more* perverse than it is in the name of a base one."

The strength and importance of *The Black Book* is that the compendium of horrors it presents is itself an answer to all the spurious arguments of Communist apologists. It establishes not just that Communist states committed criminal acts, but that they were essentially criminal enterprises. Not surprisingly, the worst offender among the Communist states is not the former Soviet Union, but the still-Communist People's Republic of China. In that state, peasant families sold their children to be eaten during the era of state-created famine. The Chinese Gulag—the so-called *laogai*, a prison system virtually unknown in the West—still holds the most political prisoners in the world, and they live under barbaric conditions. Jean-Louis Margolin tells us in *The Black Book* that twenty million died in that system after the Communist victory in 1949; twenty million others during the Great Leap Forward of 1959-61; and many thousands more during the Great Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. But why expose all this now—when "most favored nation" status, growing trade and investment by Western corporations, and the continuation of stable diplomatic relations are at stake? As so often in the past, Western business leaders aid and abet historical amnesia.

MARTIN MALIA SUGGESTS that it is the lingering desire for a utopia on earth that leads so many to resist condemning the Communist project; to do so might force them to forsake the utopian dream. Communism was a warped religion, one with its own saints, its own founding fathers, and its own group of heretics and renegades. And yet, ironically, the authors of the book—along with François Furet, Arthur Koestler, and George Orwell among others—were at one time themselves men of the left who were tempted by the utopian dream. Many of the most important insights about communism have come from former Communists, those who came to realize that the road to hell was paved with good intentions. It was precisely their humane motivations, their belief in a moral social order and a good society, that led those who became ex-Communists to comprehend, and to devote their lives to testifying about, Communist reality. It was the betrayal of the ideals they cherished that led them to turn against their faith.

This book needs most to be read by the remaining remnants of the Western left who still cling to leftover illusions. Still trying to create a "new man," they now insist that real socialism was never tried, conveniently forgetting that when "real existing socialism" was in power they consistently honored and defended it, at the same time condemning its critics as scoundrels. There are, unfortunately, enough such people still around that, as Martin Malia concludes, it will be "a very Long March indeed before communism is accorded its fair share of absolute evil."

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Negative Theology

THE CONCEPT OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: AN OLD TESTAMENT PERSPECTIVE. By JAMES BARR. *Fortress. 715 pp. $40.*

***Reviewed by* Jon D. Levenson**

FORMERLY THE REGIUS PROFESSOR of Hebrew at Oxford and now the Distinguished Professor of Hebrew Bible Emeritus at Vanderbilt Divinity School, James Barr is surely one of the leading biblical scholars of the twentieth century. His early work concentrated on linguistic issues, applying sophisticated notions of semantics to biblical Hebrew and the operations that biblical scholars perform, often naively, on the text. In more recent years, Professor Barr has increasingly devoted his capacious learning and his formidable powers of analysis to matters of biblical theology, where he has once again found himself in spirited opposition to some major trends. In his new book, he attempts to pull together the scattered corpus of his work in this field and to make a further and more systematic statement of his own position.

Although the cover and title page of *The Concept of Biblical Theology* put the first three words of the title in a smaller font than the last two, the volume devotes almost no discussion to the theology of the Bible itself. Instead, it focuses on the definition of the field of biblical theology and on an evaluation of the methods of its major practitioners (and some minor ones), all at great distance from the primary sources themselves. This gives the reader a sense of an elaborate, even labyrinthine prolegomenon to a discussion that never arrives.

BARR WRITES that "'biblical theology' has clarity only when it is understood to mean theology as it existed or was thought or believed within the time, languages, and culture of the Bible itself." This definition enormously complicates the task of including both testaments of the Christian Bible within the same theology, so much so, in Barr's view, that he has doubts about the possibility of there ever being one "pan-biblical theology," to use his unfortunate neologism. He clarifies his rather vague definition of the field by contrasting biblical theology with five other modes of study: doctrinal theology, nontheological biblical studies, history of religion, philosophical and natural theology, and "the interpretation of *parts* of the Bible as distinct from the longer complexes taken as *wholes*." In addition, Barr regards as characteristic of the field an ambivalence about whether it is descriptive or normative—a characteristic that, as we shall see, deeply afflicts his own book as well.

Barr distinguishes biblical from doctrinal theology by the goal each seeks as well as by the corpus each studies. Biblical theology "seeks to state what the theology of the biblical books, or the theology implied by them, was," whereas doctrinal theology "lays down what is to be believed." For this reason, contrary to what most biblical theologians probably think, their work "requires an *interest* in theology and an *empathy* with it, but not a personal faith-commitment." If so, there is room to wonder whether the whole enterprise is not better described as the history of the religious ideas of the Bible rather than as theology at all, and at one point, Barr momentarily defines his subject out of existence, denying that biblical theology really *is* theology:

> Its own self-description as "theology" and its own clearly expressed theological values only make it look all the more like theology when in fact it is not theology at all. The most advanced biblical theologies do not reach as far as the point at which actual theological thinking begins.

Yet he refuses to collapse biblical theology into the history of the religion of Israel, distinguishing the two this way: "'History of religion' is concerned with all the forms and aspects of all human religions, while theology tends to be concerned with the truth-claims of one religion and especially with its authoritative texts and traditions and their interpretations." The relationship of the two disciplines thus "should be one of

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overlap and mutual enrichment." An unqualified rejection of Karl Barth's dichotomy of theology and religion is a leitmotif throughout the book, and Barr has a correspondingly high estimation of the contributions to biblical theology of natural theology and philosophy (though *which* philosophy is never specified). In fact, he sees the dialectical theology associated with Barth as the greatest distorting force in biblical theology in the twentieth century.

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HAVING DISCARDED as exaggerated the dialectical theologians' division between theology and the history of religion, Barr is less than convincing in his own efforts to prevent biblical theology from collapsing into the history of Israelite (and early Christian) religion. Barr demands that his biblical theologian restrict himself to describing what the Bible said in the past tense. Like the historian of religion, the biblical theologian ought never set out to update the sense of the Bible, bringing it into the modern world. Its ancient meaning "is its *only* meaning," and the development of the ancient meaning, while essential to modern religiousness, lies "beyond the proper scope of biblical theology." Indeed, because "biblical thought does not easily lead towards traditional orthodoxy," the biblical theologian willy-nilly often undermines the received tradition. "'Heretical' opinions should be welcomed," Barr explains; "they are signs of the fact that biblical theology is different from doctrinal theology."

Some Christians do indeed welcome those "'heretical' opinions," because, in their view, they serve to correct doctrine by its proper biblical standard. Not so James Barr, for whom contemporary interpreters (but not biblical theologians) have every right to override unacceptable scriptural teachings. But even this insistence that biblical theology is only descriptive and must confine itself to the question of "what it meant" as opposed to "what it means" mysteriously evaporates on occasion. "It is quite proper for biblical theologians to judge that a particular passage represents a more central, or higher, or more positive contribution than others do," Barr writes, "and conversely to judge that another passage, or theme, or writer represents an unfortunate turning, a declension or deterioration."

But on what grounds are such judgments to be made? Surely not on those of doctrinal theology, to whose lights true biblical theology often and appropriately represents heresy, according to Barr. Nor on the grounds of the personal faith of the biblical theologian himself, since he needn't have any. One has the sense that Barr thinks there is a philosophy somewhere that authorizes these judgments, but what it is and how, if at all, it can be critiqued in turn by biblical truth he again does not say.

All interpretation must take place within a community. By dispensing with the need for "a personal faith-commitment," Barr casts his lot not with traditional religious communities of interpretation, but that community of interpretation that is the modern pluralistic university. Yet the very concept of a "Bible" implies a delimited canon and a particularistic community, reading according to its own transcendentally based conventions and in accordance with its own identity-conferring structures. That context is, to say the least, in tension with the self-styled universalism of the modern secular academy and its humanistic understanding of the Bible. In point of fact, almost everyone who has defined his field as biblical theology has been a Christian seeking to state and advance the Christian message and to work in the service of the Church. In light of Barr's problems with these goals, it is no wonder that he occasionally defines the whole field out of existence. The wonder, rather, is that he more often wants to retain the term "biblical theology" for his reconceived discipline.

IN THIS EXTENDED DISCUSSION of the different twentieth-century figures in biblical theology, Barr demonstrates his encyclopedic command of the field and his quick, logical mind,

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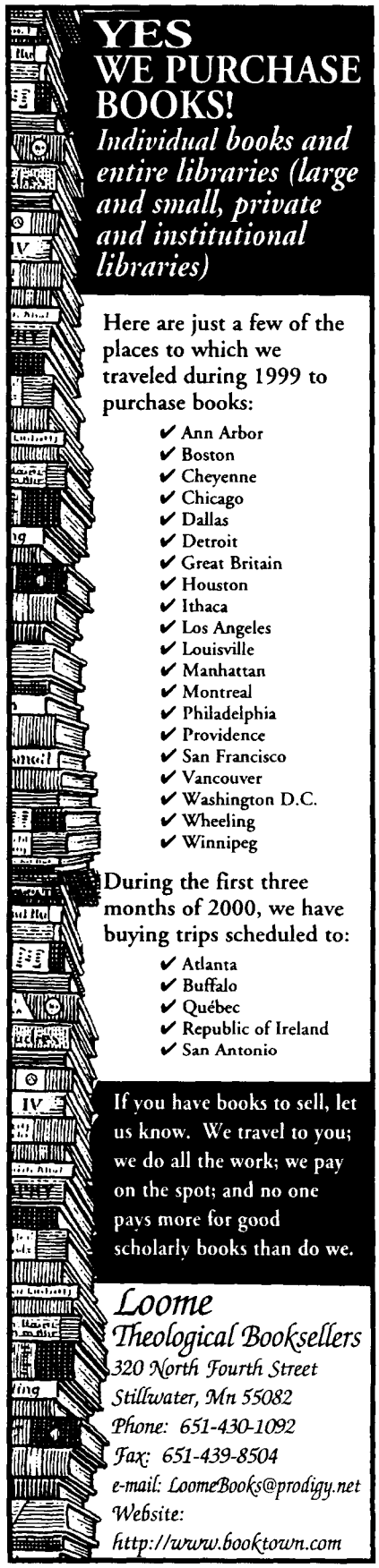
and in some of his discussions gems of insight are readily to be found. (Though I must say, I don't always understand his selections. James Sanders, for example, a well-known and respected figure in American biblical studies, receives less than a page, since, Barr explains, "he does not do much to claim that [his work] leads toward an 'Old Testament theology' or a 'biblical theology,'" while David Brown, a British theologian of whom Barr says the same, is the subject of a substantial and highly laudatory chapter.) Never one to pull a punch, Barr exhibits a directness that is sometimes refreshing, as in his characterization of "the sort of liberal/postmodern mixture influential in the so-called 'liberal' churches and theological schools, where the gospel is a combination of altruism, egalitarianism, anti-elitism, pluralism, multiculturalism, and political correctness."

Not infrequently, however, Barr's sarcasm and his vulnerability to emotional reactions get the better of him. For example, he brands as "rubbish" Francis Watson's complaint that historical criticism treats "texts as historical artifacts whose meaning is wholly determined by their historical circumstances of origin." Barr's riposte—that this does not imply that they "hav[e] *no meaning* at all beyond their historical circumstances of origin"—serves simply to relativize historical criticism and hardly demonstrates that Watson's point is "rubbish." And when Watson observes that "there is no such thing as a pure description of a neutral object," Barr retorts: "How amazingly original a thought! Who in the hermeneutical discussion has not heard it proclaimed a hundred times?" Perhaps in a field in which scholars strive to differentiate sharply between "what it meant" and "what it means"—even assigning the two questions to different disciplines—the thought needs to be proclaimed a hundred and one times.

MY OWN VIEW is that it makes a great deal of difference which religious tradition a biblical theologian belongs to, so much so that I have argued in print that a common Jewish and Christian Old Testament theology is impossible. Thus, I am not surprised to find myself under attack in Barr's new book (though at times he also concedes my point). But I was taken aback by his resorting to what Leo Strauss termed the *reductio ad Hitlerum*. In my book *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Westminster/John Knox, 1993), I endorsed a German scholar's judgment that it is a "fact, derived from the history of religion, that the Old Testament witness is a witness out of a non-Christian religion." This point, Barr writes, was "characteristic of the former pro-Nazi theologians," and then he rhetorically asks, "Does Levenson want Christianity to go along that way?" Yet on the very next page of my essay I explain that my goal is to relativize the history of religion approach, denying its preeminence without denying its value within its own domain. I argue that this move will allow Christians and Jews to juxtapose their more traditional modes of interpretation to historical criticism in an intellectually responsible way. Given Barr's own observation elsewhere in the volume under review that "the theology of the Old Testament is not the same as the theology of the New," one would have anticipated a more sympathetic and less emotional response to my posing the problem and suggesting a way forward. Apparently, Barr is so committed to the view that the relationship between biblical theology and the history of religion is exclusively one of "overlap and mutual enrichment" that he cannot brook someone's drawing attention to a point of serious tension between them.

But Barr is harshest on the scholar



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to whom he refers as "my friend Professor Brevard Childs," the distinguished Yale Old Testament theologian known for his advocacy and practice of the "canonical method" of biblical interpretation and his sympathies with Barthian theology. Time and again, Barr returns to Childs, almost always critically, devoting two whole chapters and two subsections of another chapter to his work.

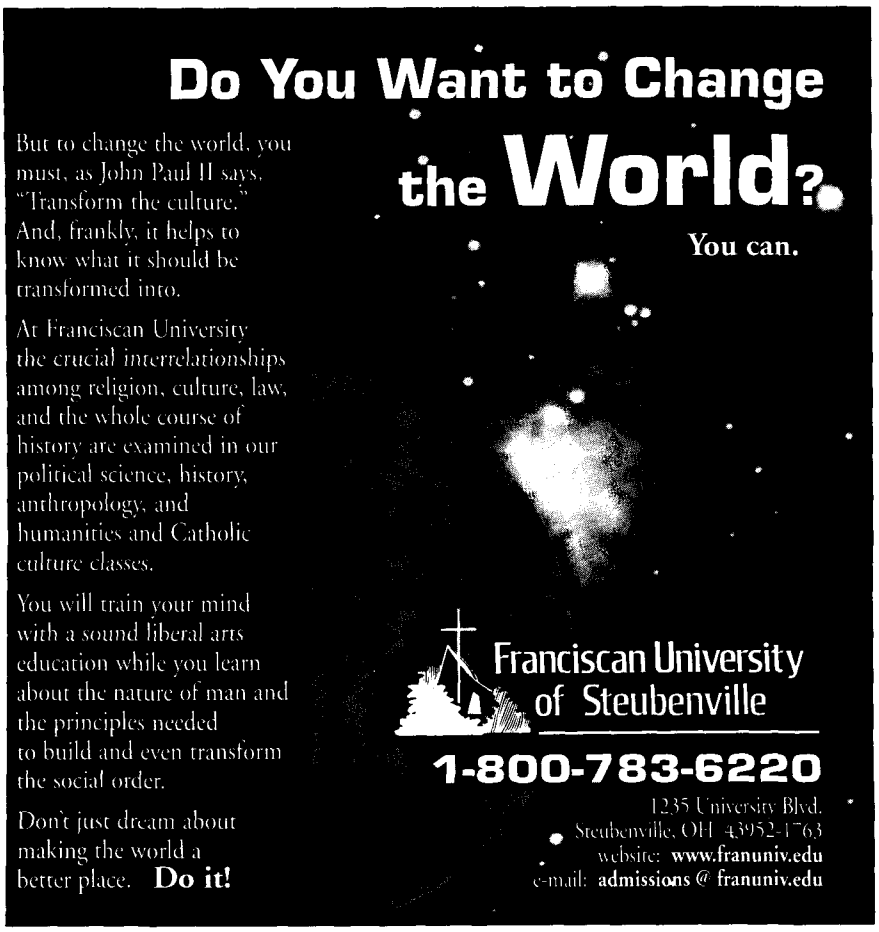
BARR'S DISTASTE for Childs' work is not surprising. Childs is explicit that his labors are in the service of the Christian message (though, like Barr, he is also learned in and deeply respectful of Judaism) and that historical-critical study, though indispensable, can never be an adequate foundation upon which to build a theological affirmation. Some of Barr's criticisms are quite plausible, such as his point that Childs uses the word "canon" in several discrete and not self-evidently compatible senses.

But Barr vitiates his own potentially formidable case against Childs by continually allowing himself to be diverted from the great hermeneutical issues to attack Childs for this or that comment, some of them mere obiter dicta. For example, in response to Childs' claim that "feminist positions . . . imply modalism in place of sound trinitarian doctrine," Barr remarks, "No feminist will find this argument other than laughable." Even if this unlikely claim be so, how does it answer Childs' criticism? And what point does James Barr score against the canonical method by telling us (in the text, not the notes) that Childs' indices are so poor that "the name of Karl Barth (or, indeed, my own) is cited in the text at numerous places which have been overlooked in the index"?

It is odd that a scholar so sympathetic to the history of religion should lack a characteristic absolutely essential to the proper practice of that discipline—the characteristic of empathy for what is strange and foreign and the eagerness to present it as fairly as possible before attacking it. To read Barr on Childs, one would have great difficulty guessing the identity of the perceived weakness in the older liberal theology that accounted for the rise and rapid spread of the dialectical alternative.

Part of the explanation for Barr's acute distaste for Childs' work may be biographical. Since Barr tells us he once believed in dialectical theology himself, perhaps his relentless attacks on it, and on Childs as its foremost exemplar in the biblical field, derive from the convert's scorn for his past orientation. But there is also a larger and more important difference in their respective confessional stances. Whereas Childs is a Presbyterian committed to reformulating the classical Calvinist doctrine of *sola scriptura* in response to the challenge of historical criticism, Barr's more modernistic position, as we have seen, awards a much smaller role to the Bible in the ascertainment of truth and a large role to post-biblical tradition, which he often sees as a corrective and an improvement over the Bible. Their differences on matters of biblical theology go back to more fundamental differences of religious identity of which neither scholar seems sufficiently cognizant. Their debates over method are mostly the old religious arguments carried on in a new idiom. One wishes that Barr had addressed this more fundamental point head-on, and without all the captiousness.

In his preface, Barr classifies his enormous new volume "as a sort of textbook," though conceding that it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is too big to serve comfortably in that role. It is also too diffuse, too reactive, and too dyspeptic. Much of it reads like an account of how everyone else has gotten things miserably and inexcusably wrong. The few discussions of figures judged favorably tend to come at the end and are sketchier and less impassioned, reading like outlines for chapters that never quite got finished. Near the close of the book, Barr again seems to despair of his subject and calls for works in the "*Christian doctrine of the Old Testament*," since "traditional Old Testament theology . . . has often tried to solve questions which, properly speaking, cannot be solved within the horizon of the Hebrew Bible itself and within the boundaries of its resources" (this last is a very valid point).

But then in the next and penultimate chapter, Barr provides, in a brief outline dominated by quotations, the essentials of David Brown's thinking, "an ideal example of a type of theology with which I would be very happy for my own work to be associated," as he terms it in his preface. This is odd not only because Brown does not describe himself as a biblical theologian or a biblical scholar at all, but also because his work, if brought into connection to that field, relates to "pan-biblical theology," about which Barr had his doubts many pages before. In his telling, the keynote of Brown's theology is openness to God's truth wherever it is found—in Enlightenment rationalism, in Judaism, in Islam, in ancient Greek religion and culture, in the Apocrypha and the Septuagint. "Continuing revelation," as Brown himself puts it, "has now taken us well beyond the canon of Scripture." The question arises, however, whether this insight can be sustained without succumbing to the weaknesses of the older liberal theology, in which religion tended to be identified with culture at its best, and sound morals and good taste replaced radical obedience to the word of God. If it cannot, then the prognosis for biblical theology in James Barr's preferred mode is indeed grim.

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Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music. By Jay R. Howard and John M. Streck. *University Press of Kentucky. 304 pp. $29.95.*

At the Crossroads: An Insider's Look at the Past, Present, and Future of Contemporary Christian Music. By Charlie Peacock. *Broadman & Holman. 224 pp. $15.99.*

***Reviewed by* Michael Linton**

"REDEMPTION." The banner headline in the May 6, 1999 Nashville *Tennessean* wasn't about religion. It was about commerce. Six-time Dove Award winner Michael English, who five years earlier had been banished from the Christian music industry when his affair with another singer had become public knowledge, was back in Music City. It was Gospel Music Week and he'd brought a new CD. In town he made the round of industry bosses and asked forgiveness. At Bill Gaither's "Homecoming Concert" (a talent showcase produced by the singer/songwriter/impresario), English was the concluding act. With fifty of the country's leading gospel singers as backup, he sang. Then he cried. Sandi Patty held his hand. Other singers raised theirs, and the crowd pronounced its absolution with a standing ovation. English had returned to the fold and next morning Christian bookstores across the country could begin restocking their bins with his CDs. He had been redeemed. And those little boxes that spit out credit card approval codes could now hum their own hallelujahs.

Michael Linton *is head of the Division of Music Theory and Composition at Middle Tennessee State University.*

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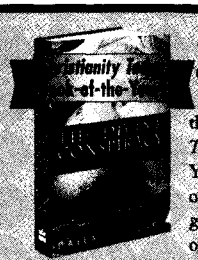

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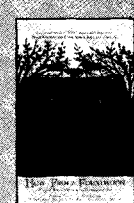

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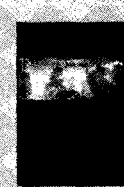

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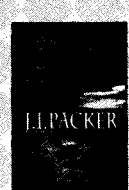

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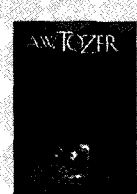

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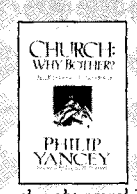

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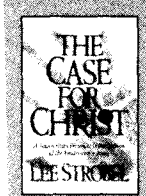

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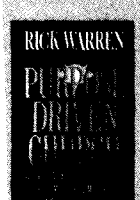

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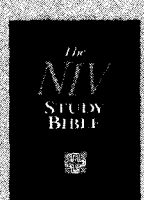

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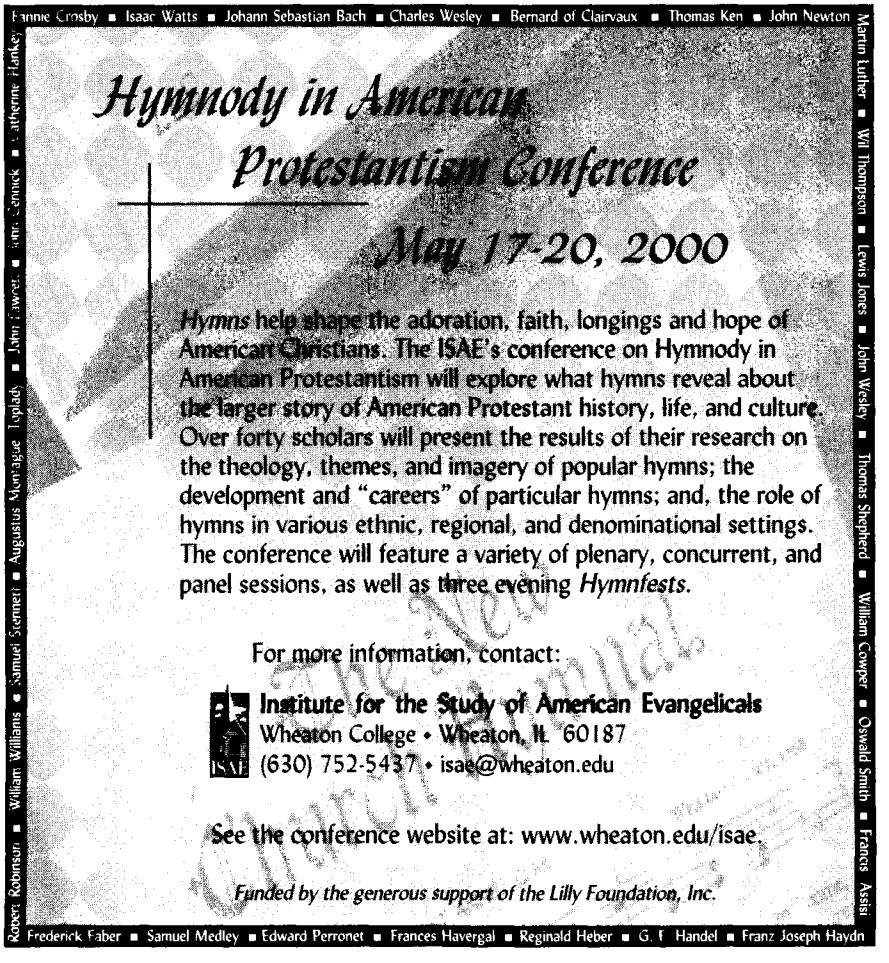
WELCOME TO THE WORLD of Christian popular music—that brew of white gospel, rock 'n' roll, Scofield dispensationalism, Azuza Street enthusiasm, Vegas theatrics, Vineyard spirituality, sex, and cash so curdled that it would have made even the stomach of Flannery O'Connor churn. Although usually called CCM for "Contemporary Christian Music," that label not only confuses the genre with the University of Cincinnati's famous music school (CCM: the College-Conservatory of Music) but also suggests an affinity be veen it and the masterpieces of Messiaen, Penderecki, Tavener, and a host of other contemporary Christian art composers—with which it has little. A better term for the music is simply "Christian Pop" or C-Pop.

A marriage of rock and Las Vegas lounge music (Ralph Carmichael, one of the genre's early leaders, was an arranger for Bing Crosby, Peggy Lee, and Nat King Cole), C-Pop was originally intended as a tool for the evangelization of white suburban youth. Performers typically called their work "ministry." But with sales of classical music almost inconsequential, and with both country and rock not growing as once expected, C-Pop has attracted the attention of major players in the music business. Sniffing untapped profits, EMI Music Group (owners of the Beastie Boys), Time Warner, Gaylord Entertainment (owners of the Grand Ole Opry, the Opryland Hotel, and Nashville's Wildhorse Saloon), and the Zomba Music Group (their current hot property is Backstreet Boys) have all made major purchases of C-Pop labels and performers. EMI owns Sparrow and Star Song Communications, Gaylord owns Word, and Zomba owns Brentwood Music, Reunion Records, and the Benson Music Group. Success in C-Pop sales is tabulated by SoundScan, the same firm that produces the Billboard charts.

Billboard charts? What happened to "ministry"? And "evangelism"? Is success in soul-winning in C-Pop measured in money? Is ministry now a commodity priced and traded on Wall Street? Are the same kinds of institutions promoting "tantric sex is the meaning of life" Sting also marketing Sandi Patty? What's wrong with this picture?

Lots. The ownership of C-Pop labels by such cultural bottom-feeders has dramatically exposed the inconsistencies within the genre and the culture of which it is a part. And that has rattled the souls of many of the Christians involved with it.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SUCH SOUL RATTLING is the subject of two recent books, one by Charlie Peacock and the other by coauthors Jay R. Howard and John M. Streck. Howard is a sociologist and *Apostles of Rock* shows that influence. It is a scholarly analysis of the society of C-Pop by sympathetic academics complete with critical apparatus. After offering an overview of the genre's origins and describing some of the attacks upon it by both intellectuals and fundamentalists, the authors construct a taxonomy of C-Pop drawn from H. Richard Niebuhr's division of Christians' relation to their culture into "separational," "integrational," and "transformational" categories.

"Separational" performers seek to emphasize the explicit distinctions between Christians and the "world," a position made paradoxical by the fact that such performers frequently are the first to adopt new styles (such as punk, heavy metal, and rap) for their lyrics. Whereas separational performers are primarily marketed through explicitly Christian book-

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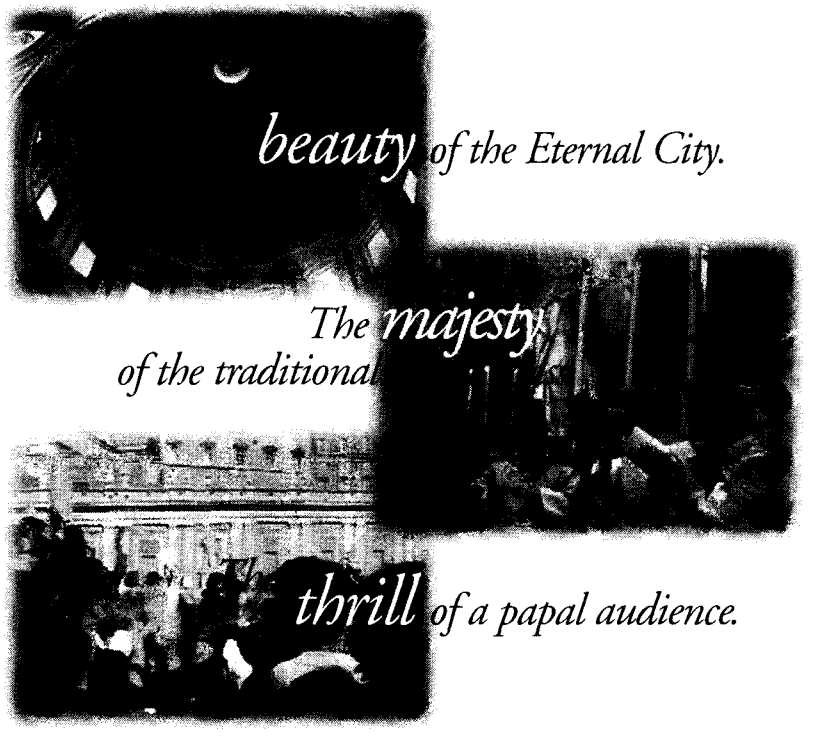
stores, "integrational" performers seek to address wider audiences, thus "crossing over" to distribution through such mainstream outlets as Tower Records and airplay on non-religious radio stations and MTV. The evangelical intent of such music is subtle, and is sometimes only an addendum to what would otherwise be a secular concert or recording. Amy Grant, by far the most commercially successful C-Pop singer, exemplifies the integrational performer. "Transformational" performers claim an aesthetic, non-commercial value for their work. Frequently highly personalized, this music is aimed not so much at evangelism as at confronting the already evangelized with their shortcomings. Howard and Streck present a picture of C-Pop splintered into factions yet fundamentally united by its roots in American evangelicalism and commercial popular music.

Peacock is a major figure in C-Pop, having won awards as a singer, songwriter, and producer. In 1995 he launched re:think, his own record label distributed through EMI. Although it touches on the history of C-Pop, his *At the Crossroads* is primarily a plea for the artistic integrity of the genre along with a deeply felt indictment of C-Pop's theological shallowness and growing commercialism.

Both books are quite helpful in their presentations of C-Pop's history. Peacock, for example, shrewdly suggests that its shallowness is partly the direct result of early musicians' conviction that Christ's return was imminent. (Why think seriously about the long-term effects of what you're doing if there is not going to be any long term?) His accusation that merchandised C-Pop is now close to fraud when it claims to be anything more than just one more musical commodity carries the ring of truth.

But both books also have significant failings. First, all the writers seem unaware of the vibrant and



All three are captured, together with the vibrant faith of tens of thousands of pilgrims who traveled to Rome in 1998 to mark the tenth anniversary of Pope John Paul II's letter *Ecclesia Dei*, on the magnificent video *Pilgrimage*. This ninety-minute video presents the highlights of the week-long celebration of the Holy Father's measure granting permission for the traditional Latin Mass, and of the anniversary of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, which was founded just weeks after *Ecclesia Dei* was issued.

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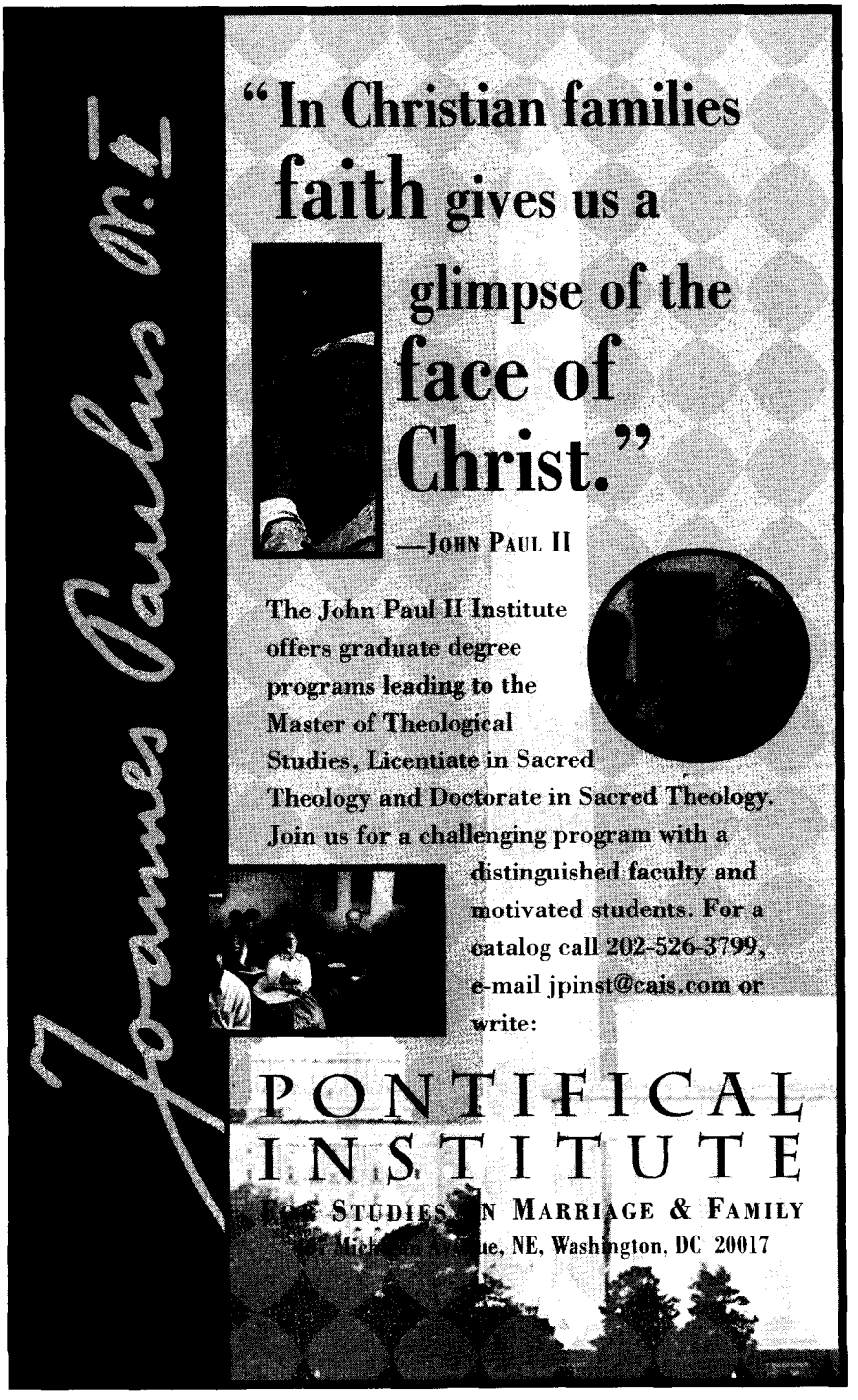
internationally significant Christian musicians who have nothing to do with C-Pop. Douglas Yeo (bass trombonist with the Boston Symphony), Phil Smith (principal trumpet with the New York Philharmonic), Wendy White (mezzo-soprano with the Metropolitan Opera), Jerry Blackstone (co-director of the country's leading conducting program at the University of Michigan), and Michael Kurick (award-winning composer on Vanderbilt's faculty) are but a handful of the hundreds upon hundreds of Christians active as professional musicians outside of C-Pop. Not only is this world invisible to the authors, they are also apparently unaware of how big an impediment "Christian" music is to the evangelization of musicians who hold C-Pop in professional contempt. (In Nashville, musicians asked to work on C-Pop recordings regularly refer to such gigs as doing "J-J": "junk for Jesus.") Thus one of the main ironies of C-Pop is that in evangelizing one group (namely suburban youth), its very character is a hindrance to the evangelization of another (the culture's top musicians). The world of Christian music is more splintered than Howard and Streck suggest.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FURTHERMORE, NONE of the writers actually discusses *music*. While this may be excusable in Howard and Streck since they are writing a work of social analysis, there are sociological issues that deserve serious engagement. They are too quick to dismiss those critics who argue that the aesthetics of rock cannot be intelligently combined with Christian lyrics. From the phallic use of the guitar (where masturbation is pantomimed, sometimes complete with ejaculatory pyrotechnics) to the hypersexualized costuming and the mind-numbing volume—rock is and always has been, primarily at least, about sex undisciplined by either marriage or courtship. Those critics who condemn such a medium as unfit for Christian evangelization or worship require much more thoughtful consideration than Howard and Streck give them.

It also would have been useful for these writers to consider C-Pop within the broader context of niche-driven evangelicalism, exemplified by congregations such as Willow Creek and Grace Chapel, publishing houses that market things like "the women's Bible," and even those evangelist muscle men who thrill pre-teens by shattering bricks with their heads—all for Jesus of course. Clearly, C-Pop is part of a larger phenomenon.

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But back to Michael English's "redemption." The real question about C-Pop is, What happens to the gospel when the gospel becomes profitable? When "take up your cross and follow me" becomes a commercial item and is tailored for select markets, what kind of a cross is it? Why was English's redemption something to be celebrated only when he was once more "market worthy"? With sales of C-Pop reaching half a billion dollars annually and its aesthetic invading the liturgies of almost all confessions and denominations, the kind of cross exalted by C-Pop invites careful examination. These books, despite their limitations, could prepare the way for that.

Not So Gay Blades

The Age of the Bachelor: Creating an American Subculture. By Howard P. Chudacoff. *Princeton University Press. 341 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by* Paul R. McHugh**

Howard Chudacoff, a professor of history at Brown University, has written what amounts to a propagandist tract in the form of a purported sociological history of the experience of unmarried men in America from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. He has propped up his narrative with some data that estimate the numbers of men in this category and their ages over the last hundred years, but data is not really the point here. Chudacoff wants to convince us that these men produced a kind of subculture embedded within—even though slightly resented by—the dominant culture characterized by the family and the married man.

The book is nothing if not thorough. It includes a chapter on domestic life that reviews how and where single men lived; a chapter on associations such as the YMCA and YMHA, which sprang up in these years to offer support, wholesome company, and structure to bachelor life in the city; a chapter on bachelor-frequented institutions (a rather more dignified term than most readers would choose) such as the saloon, the pool and dance halls, and the barber shops. Chudacoff describes how the demands of single life promoted neighborhood services such as laundries, pawn shops, and drug stores with tobacco and soda services, but he dismisses society's apprehension that such neighborhood facilities could be sites of vice and dissipation, implying that they were simply products of the service economy single men required.

Chudacoff wants to put to rest the stereotype of bachelor life as one of disorganization and dissipating anonymity. Bachelor subculture, he holds, shaped and was shaped by city life and contributed to the diversity of America by encouraging new forms of social order different from, and in some ways richer than, family life. It is an interesting argument, but it fails primarily because the evidence the author cites tends to prove the opposite—namely, that bachelor life in America has always been experienced as a phase, and a mostly uncomfortable phase at that. When it is not successfully passed through, the life that follows can be nasty and anomic. Most tellingly, Chudacoff announces that he adopts, and indeed plans to support, the positive view of diversified bachelor life described by George Chauncey in his book, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940.* From this source, it is easy to anticipate the sort of diversity that Chudacoff has in mind.

It only makes matters worse for Chudacoff's proposition that the majority of bachelors at the turn of the century lived with families—indeed, one-third of bachelor sons lived in the parental home as they tried to get their lives sorted out. Among the Irish (as exemplified by men like Al Smith) the proportion living at home—often with widowed mothers—was 10 to 15 percent higher than in other ethnic groups.

The boarding house encompassed about another third of bachelors. This style of living emerged in the mid-nineteenth century and offered men who were dislocated from family—usually immigrants or young workmen looking for opportunities in a new city—a supportive environment with more than just a room and bed. The houses had common rooms and group dining that offered sociability and camaraderie to their tenants. The lives of these boarding house men have been well described by Richard Stott in his 1990 book *Workers in the Metropolis,* which, while appreciating the many uncomfortable features of this existence, does describe the friendships that emerged among the boarders and specifically notes an absence of homosexuality.

Chudacoff, who throughout his book tends to introduce the theme of homosexuality with hints and surmises rather than data, counters Stott's argument with this: "More recently [actually less recently—in 1985 and 1988] other historians have discovered hints [of homosexual relations]." He would have us believe that many of these men were homosexual and that many of the institutions and associations he describes facilitated homosexual encounters—all without documenting the magnitude of this behavior or the numbers of men involved. An unbiased view would presume the numbers of homosexual men at that time to be quite small—most likely the 2 to 2.5

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percent that is now reported—and as far as I can see from the evidence, these few homosexual men did little or nothing to influence the bachelor subculture at the turn of the century.

If the bachelors were seldom homosexual, then Chudacoff would have us believe that they were struggling to free themselves from the "constraints" of traditional living. The evidence that a majority lived with families belies this opinion. Even those living alone give evidence of cherishing traditional links. A nice demonstration of Chudacoff's distortion of the facts is a photograph—the only photograph in the book of a bachelor alone—showing a man in his boarding house room with what the author calls "ornate decorations" on the wall. The decorations? The Virgin Mary, the Holy Family, the Transfiguration, the Crucifixion, and the like—not an abandonment of traditions at all, but a devotion to them by a man in social transition.

Indeed, many of the photographs Chudacoff includes refute his idea of a reorganizing and enriching role for the bachelor subculture in these times. Rather they depict a dismal existence in the cafes, locker rooms, and pool and dance halls of the time. The only photograph depicting an opulent and graceful bachelor life in a swank bar is taken from a Culver Pictures movie set. It is perhaps not surprising that this was the picture used for the book's front cover.

All of this is crucial given that Chudacoff never discusses the loneliness and forsakenness felt by many single people. In particular, he never describes the down-and-out districts of the American cities where bachelors did congregate. It is from these districts, among the bachelors who lived in them, that the highest rates of suicide in our country have been reported since the turn of the century. Ruth Cavan, in her classic book *Suicide*, showed that, in Chicago, high suicide rates were clustered in neighborhoods consisting mostly of cheap hotels and rooming houses where weak social links, unstable relationships, and impersonality were the norm. Chudacoff makes no mention of suicide among bachelors, a neglect of familiar evidence about their subculture and its problems that must be deliberate.

One of the most crucial facts Chudacoff plays down is that from the late 1920s through the 1960s most men abandoned bachelor life early in their twenties, with the result that the subculture he wishes to celebrate dwindled. Why did this happen, if the joys of bachelor life were so great? The most likely explanation is that family life became possible for more men during that time, and more men chose it above the bachelor subculture.

THE AGE OF THE BACHELOR ends with the present time and a reemergence of bachelorhood. Chudacoff depicts —indeed celebrates—this reemergence with a photograph of Hugh Hefner surrounded by his "bunnies" and another of a Gay Pride parade. He suggests that this contemporary state of bachelor affairs is the natural fulfillment of the subculture of the turn of the century and, as well, that these formative expressions were originally suppressed and unacknowledged.

Nothing is further from the truth. Bachelorhood was a phase for many men in the last century and the early years of this one. But it was more a forced existence than a "lifestyle choice," and men abandoned it when economic progress made it possible. The more recent phase of bachelorhood, sustained by the libertinism of the American sexual revolution, sprang forth with the great wealth showered upon Americans after World War II and was, to an astonishing degree, the creation of two well-published sex zealots, Alfred Kinsey and Hugh Hefner.

The bachelor subculture that was a part of the development of this nation has been replaced by a hedonistic, nihilistic, indulgent male counterculture inhabited by the "playboy" and the "gay blade." To argue that the first was indeed a form of the second is a distortion of social and cultural history.

To NATO from Plato

JUSTICE AMONG NATIONS: ON THE MORAL BASIS OF POWER AND PEACE. By THOMAS L. PANGLE and PETER J. AHRENSDORF. *University Press of Kansas. 362 pp. $45.*

***Reviewed by* Glenn Tinder**

MAKERS OF American foreign policy today are experiencing a philosophical dearth, a want of broad principles of governmental conduct in world affairs. This is due primarily to the new power relationships created by the collapse of the Soviet Union. No longer is politics among nations structured by the dramatically simple confrontation of two superpowers. The world has always contained more complexities than the bare concept of bipolarity adequately explained, but suddenly the complexities, now set loose from any clear framework of interpretation, seem to be crowding in upon us. In these circumstances, *Justice Among Nations*—dealing, as the subtitle indicates, with "the moral basis of power and peace"—is very much to the point.

In form, the book is a broad history of Western political philosophy. It is distinctive in giving particular attention to ideas bearing on international relations, these having been of peripheral concern to most

GLENN TINDER *is Professor of Political Science Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and author of* The Political Meaning of Christianity.

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of the great political thinkers of the past, hence neglected in standard histories of political philosophy. In substance, however, the book is more than a history. The authors reveal their intent, as well as their method, in a characterization of "the true Socratic" as seen by Cicero. He is one who "writes in such a way that he need not declare his own views but may leave his teaching as a politically responsible provocation to the reader to think for himself." The ultimate concern of Pangle and Ahrensdorf is philosophical rather than historical, and the audience they address is made up exclusively of those willing, whether as amateurs or professionals, to be philosophers on their own. They aspire to lead readers inhabiting the new world of power politics into realms of reflection in which they can search in their own ways for the principles that tell us how and when nation should act upon nation.

They accomplish their aim with such evident professional mastery that a critical appraisal scarcely seems called for. The authors display a thorough knowledge of the history of political thought, and they describe this history, in its bearing on global politics, in clear, vigorous, and unpretentious prose. A reviewer thus is not prompted to ask whether the book is a good one. Clearly it is. Nor is a reviewer tempted to outline the lessons to be drawn from the book. That would be to preempt a task that the authors themselves, with their Socratic aim and method, eschew. But it does seem in order to indicate the kind of issues in which readers may find themselves engrossed.

There is, for example, the venerable issue of just war. This is given new life by showing that the traditional doctrine, contrary to many presentations, is not mere common sense. Thus in the Middle Ages self-defense was not seen as justifying war. For both St. Augustine and St. Thomas, war was just solely when launched for the purpose of punishing wrongdoing. A morally legitimate war was punitive—a policing action. Just war doctrine thus originated in the consciousness of a moral order informing relations among nations, and in the conviction that war-making leaders should be animated primarily by moral considerations.

This of course is appealing to idealists. But idealists will be set back (and impelled to think) by the corollary which, the authors argue, accompanied so moral a standard. They argue that medieval just war doctrine, at

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least among the Scholastics, allowed for "the infliction of atrocities against entire civilian populations in cities with a view to spreading terror in the hearts of the enemy and inflaming the ferocity of the just warriors"—a view at first glance completely unacceptable yet, we should note, receiving implicit support in recent times in America. Debate arising on the fiftieth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima elicited cogent arguments to the effect that, given the alternatives, the use of nuclear weapons in that instance was not completely unreasonable.

JUST WAR DOCTRINE is interesting partly because it presents a double issue, that of ends and of means in the use of organized violence. An issue more thoroughly philosophical, yet absolutely inescapable, is that of natural law. Throughout the history of political thought, the idea of natural law, in one form or another, has been integral to the claim that politics must be construed and carried on in accordance with moral principles. It has been virtually equivalent to the notion that beneath the disorder among polities there is a moral ground, knowable apart from revelation, hence common to the whole human race, irrespective of varying cultures and faiths.

However, with David Hume and his questioning of the necessities that had been thought to bind together the outward order of nature, a breach in this ground appeared. As we know, Immanuel Kant constructed repairs by means of the concept of the categorical imperative, and these for a time were effective. In the twentieth century, however, the breach has opened up into a chasm, not only through the systematic atrocities committed by various tyrannical and totalitarian nations, and the seemingly untroubled relativism professed by most intellectuals, but through the postmodern thesis that the order of nature is no more than a construct of human power and self-interest. Is there any philosophical pathway by which we might return to this ground? If not, where can we find the standards so urgently needed in the global politics of our day?

A RELATED ISSUE, posed in various ways in *Justice Among Nations*, concerns the final purpose that human nature (if such exists) sets for our lives. Is it power? Justice? Self-preservation? Divergent answers to these questions gave rise to a debate well-known to everyone familiar with scholarly controversies in twentieth-century America—that between "idealists" and "realists." The former is typified by Woodrow Wilson, the latter by Reinhold Niebuhr, (who is inexplicably ignored by Pangle and Ahrensdorf). The polarity is quite artificial in that "idealists" were not necessarily indifferent to reality nor did "realists" ordinarily deny moral ideals. But it did reflect a persistent divergence of temperament and emphasis, if not of principle. And often, of course, Christians were among the realists—those impressed by how preoccupied humans are, sometimes rightfully, sometimes not, by matters of power and self-interest.

The authors suggest that deeper than the issue of idealism and realism, which is mainly modern, is an issue prominent in antiquity and the Middle Ages: that of "classical rationalism," as enunciated most fully by Cicero, and "biblical theology," as typified by the writings of Augustine and Aquinas. This is a wise suggestion. The older dichotomy focuses, as the modern dichotomy does not, on religion. In this way it involves us in reflection not only on empirical human nature but on the divine origin and end of human life, or at least on the question of whether there is such an origin and end.

Justice Among Nations does not probe very deeply into such matters, and this may be its most serious weakness. This weakness may be seen, however, as the obverse side of strength. The authors do not think very carefully about political theology, one may surmise, because their minds are on philosophy. Their view of philosophy—emergent again and again in the course of the book—is highly debatable, yet, especially for religious readers, of considerable interest.

IN THEIR ANALYSIS of practically every thinker, the authors manifest an urge to exalt a life of philosophical contemplation, or at least of philosophical activity, set apart from the polity. Such a life is not only inherently noble; it is somehow essential to the balance and health of the political order. The authors detect a conviction to this effect in most of the philosophers they discuss, including Thucydides. They suggest that even Machiavelli may have harbored a secret preference for a private, philosophical life. Here important questions, some perhaps of a sort the authors do not intend to provoke, may arise in a reader's mind.

To begin with, do we need philosophers or philosophical thinking to advance justice among nations? There are numerous philosophies at hand, and it may be that what we lack is not original thought but rather a consensus as to which of these philosophies is most relevant to our situation. Or perhaps we lack statesmen of philosophical depth. Or our need may be for the sort of settled and judicious national purposes that come more from culture and tradition than from solitary reflection. Few would deny that philosophical reflection is among the more estimable human activities. That it has very much to do with the wise conduct of foreign relations, however, will not be as clear to many readers as it seemingly is to Pangle and Ahrensdorf.

The most significant questions of all—neglected by the authors in spite

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of their interest in the classical rationalism/biblical theology dichotomy—concern the relationship between philosophy and religion. One might ask, for example, whether the ideal of philosophical contemplation makes sense outside of a religious context. Why should an empiricist, who envisions the universe as originating in chance and unfolding in causal laws unrelated to any ultimate purpose, find unsurpassable delight in beholding reality? Plato, with his doctrine of forms, may have found such delight (although his forays into practical governance raise doubts). But Thucydides? It is impossible not to wonder about the suggestion of Pangle and Ahrensdorf that Thucydides attained greater fulfillment in contemplating the terrible events of the Peloponnesian War as an historian than he would have had he been able to continue as an Athenian general.

In addition to the question of contemplative delight there is that of moral guidance. Can philosophy, without religion, provide the moral resources needed in a world of contentious and masterless nations? The Western concept of justice—which governs relations among nations as well as those among individuals—involves necessarily the proposition that every individual is sacred. Biblical religion supports that proposition. Does philosophy? Perhaps a few philosophies, such as later Stoicism and Kantianism, do. Their support, however, is disputed by other philosophers, and is thereby vulnerable in a way that religious support is not. Most philosophies render incomprehensible or absurd the notion that a human being as such, regardless of intelligence, education, beauty, character, and other such personal qualities, is of unconditional worth. Even so large a spiritual figure as Plato gave no support to such a notion.

In short, the highly philosophical authors of *Justice Among Nations* may be reproached for not being sufficiently critical of philosophy itself. Perhaps, however, they would be undisturbed by this reproach. Their purpose, after all, is not to lead readers to specific conclusions but to provoke the kind of thinking through which they will reach their own conclusions. It seems safe to say that this purpose will be achieved with most of their readers, who will find themselves pondering not only the social role of philosophy but a multitude of other questions related to the perplexing and perilous global politics of our time.

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Charles Darwin

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BRIEFLY NOTED

THE FIRST AND THE LAST. By ISAIAH BERLIN. *New York Review Books. 141 pp. $19.95.*

In 1996, two years before he died at the age of eighty-nine, Isaiah Berlin received a request from a professor of philosophy at Wuhan University in China, asking him to offer a précis of his core ideas for a Chinese audience. Berlin, one of the great anti-totalitarian thinkers of the century, found the request intriguing—a sign, perhaps, of the growing pluralism of Chinese intellectual life—and "My Intellectual Path," the last major essay of his life and the key piece in this volume, resulted. The essay, a useful introduction to Berlin's thought, reveals him at his best and at his worst. On the positive side, Berlin restates his decisive arguments against determinism of every kind, exhibits again his acute awareness of the human world as irreducibly tragic, and sketches his deeply informed reading of the history of modern Western intellectual life as an ongoing struggle between Enlightenment rationalism and romanticism—with neither capturing the whole truth about man. On the negative side, Berlin's pluralism here sounds suspiciously like moral relativism—this is far from always true in his work—and he wrongly lumps together all of premodern thought as morally and politically monistic. *The First and the Last* also includes the earliest surviving piece of Berlin's, written when he was just twelve: a fascinating and accomplished short story, "The Purpose Justifies the Ways," that grew out of his horror at witnessing a revolutionary lynch mob drag away a Czarist policeman, presumably to his death, during the Russian Revolution. It shows the young Berlin to be as fiercely antitotalitarian as would be the man who became the doyen of British political philosophy. In addition to Berlin's first and last writings, the book reprints five tributes to Berlin from colleagues and former students.

— Brian C. Anderson

THE DECLINE OF MALES. By LIONEL TIGER. *Golden Books. 323 pp. $23.*

Anthropologist Lionel Tiger (*Men in Groups*) consistently informs and provokes. This time around he explains why the contraceptive revolution (including abortion) has created a historically unprecedented situation in which women have assumed control over reproduction, thus making men, for the most part, expendable. Tiger's forte is neither moral philosophy nor public policy, but his data and analysis provide important grist for all the intellectual mills pertinent to figuring out what is happening and why to marriage, family, and child rearing.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD OF LOVE: A NEW VISION OF MARRIAGE IN THE LIGHT OF JOHN PAUL II'S ANTHROPOLOGY. By MARY SHIVANANDAN. *Catholic University of America Press. 324 pp. $24.95 paper.*

A thorough study of the foundations and cultural implications of the Pope's views on love, marriage, and family. The author, who teaches at the John Paul II Institute for Studies in Marriage and the Family, makes use of the whole gamut of Karol Wojtyla's literary output to give one of the best overviews yet of his thought on these most important questions. Shivanandan's investigation of the foundations of John Paul II's thought is especially well done, and three chapters examining the deeper issues behind the birth control movement and Natural Family Planning are quite useful. Despite poor editing, which makes this generally thoughtful and accessible book read at times like a doctoral thesis, it is a crucial resource for understanding the Pope's vision of marriage, and what it means to put that vision into action.

CHOOSING EQUALITY: SCHOOL CHOICE, THE CONSTITUTION, AND CIVIL SOCIETY. By JOSEPH P. VITERITTI. *Brookings. 282 pp. $29.95.*

Written from what might be described as a moderately liberal perspective, this argument for parental choice in education is pitched to those who may be hostile to the idea, and especially to vouchers or other programs that include religious schools. Viteritti is undoubtedly right in thinking that parental choice is an idea whose time has come, and one may hope that he is right in thinking the Supreme Court will uphold this move toward equality of educational opportunity.

A CATHOLIC MODERNITY? CHARLES TAYLOR'S MARIANIST AWARD LECTURE. Edited by JAMES L. HEFT. *Oxford University Press. 130 pp. $22.*

This is a very little but very important book. The centerpiece is the title essay by McGill University philosopher Charles Taylor, with four responses (by William M. Shea, Rosemary Luling Haughton, George Marsden, and Jean Bethke Elshtain) followed by Taylor's response to the responses. The great question, according to Taylor, is not how to be modern Catholics but how to be Catholic moderns in a circumstance that is not unlike that of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), the Jesuit missionary in China who had to sort through what could be assimilated and what must be rejected in a culture alien to Christianity. Christians, says Taylor, must affirm the great achievements of modernity—in some cases

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achieved *against* Christendom—while being alert to the fatal inadequacies of a secular humanism that excludes the transcendent. The best Christian strategy, he suggests, is one of sympathetic cultural engagement that opens a reductive secularism to the transcendent truths that can alone sustain the achievements of modernity. Taylor's lecture and the discussion surrounding it offer an occasion of rare grace and lucidity in trying to understand how to be Christian in a culture whose intellectual elites have, for the most part, decided that Christianity is either irrelevant or threatening.

A SACRIFICE OF PRAISE: AN ANTHOLOGY OF CHRISTIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH FROM CAEDMON TO THE MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY. Edited by JAMES H. TROTT. *Cumberland House. 797 pp. $24.95 paper.*

A labor of love to be received as a gift by those who know that man is not only the caretaker but the cantor of creation. Of the twelve centuries of poetry included, nearly a hundred pages are devoted to the first half of the twentieth (the editor had to stop somewhere). It is a century of praise more hesitantly, often obliquely, sometimes ironically, expressed. But, for all that, not less intensely. A splendid book to be kept close at hand and visited again and again.

VIRTUAL HISTORY: ALTERNATIVES AND COUNTERFACTUALS. Edited by NIALL FERGUSON. *Basic. 450 pp. $30.*

What if Charles I had defeated the Covenanters, Britain had not entered World War I, Hitler had defeated Stalin, JFK had not been assassinated, and there had been no Cold War? These are among the questions entertainingly explored in playing "What if . . . ?" The entertainment gets off to a rocky start with a very long and intellectually inflated essay by editor Ferguson, insisting that this kind of exercise is ever so much more than a historians' parlor game, that it engages the deepest questions of the philosophy of history, the mystery of time, and what counts as reality. Such heavy duty ponderings aside, the reader is invited to join nine imaginative historians who have great fun in presenting counterfactual possibilities in a most readable fashion, in the course of which one is strengthened in the commonsensical belief that human beings, who have a capacity for freedom, make decisions that have consequences. Reading about what did not happen can be an interesting way of thinking again about what did.

ORESTES BROWNSON: SIGN OF CONTRADICTION. By R. A. HERRERA. *Intercollegiate Studies Institute. 234 pp. $24.95.*

Orestes Augustus Brownson (1803-1876) was a prolific intellectual gadfly who went through Congregationalism, Unitarianism, several of his own invented spiritualities, and finally ended up as one of the best known, if controversial, Catholic writers of the nineteenth century. R. A. Herrera tells a lively story in a lively manner, concluding that Brownson is today undeservedly neglected, while at the same time suggesting that he was a period piece eccentric who is deservedly neglected.

ENDURING LIBERALISM: AMERICAN POLITICAL THOUGHT SINCE THE 1960S. By ROBERT BOOTH FOWLER. *University Press of Kansas. 330 pp. $35.*

A professor of political science at the University of Wisconsin who has written extensively on American religion here offers a thoughtful overview of our political temper and tensions. While public intellectuals are inclined to polemicize against liberalism from both the right and the left, Professor Fowler believes that they, like most Americans, work within an enduringly liberal framework, which he thinks a very good thing. Critically sympathetic toward sundry communitarianisms, Fowler's capacious understanding of liberalism includes the community of thinkers associated with this journal whose critique of liberalism he is inclined to view as eminently liberal. Scholarly and fair-minded throughout, his complaisant conclusion might by some be mistaken for complacency.

THE NECESSITY OF POLITICS: RECLAIMING AMERICAN PUBLIC LIFE. By CHRISTOPHER BEEM. *University of Chicago Press. 311 pp. $28.*

The author traces the much-discussed "civil society" movement through the thought of Nisbet, Berger, Neuhaus, Putnam, et al., all of whom he identifies with the tradition of Tocqueville. While he is sympathetic to this intellectual and public policy turn, he believes it does not do justice to the indispensable role of the state, especially as a pedagogue inculcating and sustaining a public moral consensus. As a corrective, he invokes—some will think surprisingly—Hegel. Acknowledging the excesses of political Hegelianism, Beem thinks that it can be safely contained within the American democratic tradition. An interesting, if not entirely persuasive, argument.

COMMONWEAL CONFRONTS THE CENTURY: LIBERAL CONVICTIONS, CATHOLIC TRADITIONS. Edited by PATRICK JORDAN and PAUL BAUMANN. *Simon & Schuster. 411 pp. $18 paper.*

Commonweal, the liberal Catholic magazine, has turned seventy-five, and here are collected some its best by Wilfred Sheed, Daniel Callahan,

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John Lukacs, Willa Cather, Evelyn Waugh, and many other distinguished contributors. *Commonweal*'s liberalism is different from the Catholic left, represented by, for instance, the *National Catholic Reporter*. Some on the right might say that the chief difference is that its dissent from orthodoxy is more insidious, but in fact its editors frequently demonstrate a capacity to be self-critical about their liberalism and are clearly serious, if nervous, about the normative truths of Catholicism. Yet the subtitle is telling. Should it not be *Catholic Convictions, Liberal Traditions*? As it is, the reader might get the wrong impression: that Catholic tradition is a qualifying, even limiting, factor relative to what the editors really care about. That does not do justice to *Commonweal*'s role as the custodian of a Catholic liberalism that is not without honor.

ECUMENISM: PRESENT REALITIES AND FUTURE PROSPECTS. Edited by LAWRENCE S. CUNNINGHAM. *University of Notre Dame Press. 196 pp. $35.*

Papers from a 1997 conference at the Tantur Ecumenical Center outside Jerusalem. Of particular interest are church historian Jaroslav Pelikan (then Lutheran, now Orthodox) on the Tradition that unites and the traditions that divide, and Orthodox theologian Thomas Hopko on how Orthodoxy understands its engagement in the ecumenical task.

THE SAINTS IN THE LIVES OF ITALIAN-AMERICANS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION. Edited by JOSEPH A. VARACALLI, SALVATORE PRIMEGGIA, SALVATORE J. LAGUMINA, and DONALD J. D'ELIA. *Forum Italicum. 323 pp. $20.*

A collection of scholarly essays from historical, cultural, sociological, and theological perspectives that explore the ways in which Italian-American identity has been shaped by devotion to the saints. Included are studies of, inter alia, popular religiosity, spiritual tradition, ethnicity, parish life, "realistic multiculturalism," and the "incarnational realism" that is a hallmark of Italian-American identity. This book is, in the first place, a fascinating study of one of America's most successful ethnic groups. Perhaps more important for readers of this journal, it demonstrates that when religion becomes a force in social and cultural life, the result is not a deadened public square but a more vibrant one.

AUGUSTINE THROUGH THE AGES: AN ENCYCLOPEDIA. Edited by ALLAN D. FITZGERALD, O.S.A. *Eerdmans. 902 pp. $75.*

This is a magnificent achievement. In the foreword, Jaroslav Pelikan writes, "At first glance it might seem to be an excessive loyalty to tradition and an example of scholarly overkill to devote an entire encyclopedia of almost a thousand pages to one man, even if that man is Augustine of Hippo." He goes on to explain, most persuasively, why such a book is needed. Almost 150 scholars contribute 500 articles on every aspect of Augustine's life, thought, and influence. The "through the ages" in the title underscores an additional factor that makes this book so singular: articles detail the influence of Augustine on others, and how his thought has been both used and misused, from his own time right up to the present. Robert Louis Wilken does not exaggerate when he says this "is a book to savor, to return to often, and to open with anticipation. It will quickly become indispensable." Essential for academic libraries, this splendid book is warmly recommended for parish and personal collections, where it should receive regular use by Christians who understand that, whether we know it or not, we are all Augustinians now—and have been for a millennium and a half.

CHURCHGOING AND CHRISTIAN ETHICS. By ROBIN GILL. *Cambridge University Press. 277 pp. $64.95 cloth, $24.95 paper.*

A vigorous sociological challenge to Christian thinkers such as Stanley Hauerwas and John Milbank who, says Gill, offer an idealistic (meaning unreal) view of a Church composed of "resident aliens" who are a community of virtue in an unvirtuous society. Drawing chiefly on data from the U.K., Gill contends that churchgoing Christians are not that different from their fellow citizens in the earthly city. A virtue theory that rests on social narrative, contends Gill, needs to be in more believable contact with social facts.

PROVOCATIONS: SPIRITUAL WRITINGS OF KIERKEGAARD. Edited and compiled by CHARLES E. MOORE. *Plough. 430 pp. $14 paper.*

This thoughtful selection of Kierkegaard's writings serves on several levels. In the first place, it makes the otherwise daunting Kierkegaard accessible in an inviting format. Secondly, its logical arrangement of texts presents the major themes of his work, as in the sections "To Will One Thing," "Truth and the Inwardness of Passion," and "Anxiety and the Gospel of Suffering." And thirdly the book is prayerful: it invites worshipful devotion as much as intellectual reflection, a rare and rewarding combination.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

Forget the Bilderbergers

Who will guard the guardians? That question, variously expressed, is among the oldest in political theory and practice. Jeremy Rabkin, professor of government at Cornell, has written an important book, *Why Sovereignty Matters* (1998), that addresses that old question in a way both thoughtful and provocative. It's not that national sovereignty is sacred. It's not. The sacralized nation-state is one of the great idols of modern history. At the same time, our ideas of political and legal legitimacy in "politics among nations" (Hans Morgenthau) assumes the sovereignty of the nation-state. And some nation-states, the United States among them, are founded on the premise of the political sovereignty of the people, as in government by "the consent of the governed." The guardians are guarded by their accountability to the sovereign people of the nation. These ideas of democratic legitimacy are gaining ascendancy in the world, but they do not go unchallenged.

Such challenges come from conventional despotisms and dictatorships and, increasingly, from Islamist versions of a divine right to rule. But the challenge also comes from the United Nations, or, more precisely, from the forces surrounding the UN known as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Forget the Bilderbergers, Masonic conspiracies, the Trilateral Commission, and black helicopters. Fevered fantasies about sinister plots to enslave the world only get in the way of trying to understand what is happening and what might be done about it. There are numerous organizations, including certain NGOs at the UN, that explicitly contend that the nation-state is the enemy, or at least is obsolete and an obstacle to global progress. Proposals for transcending the nation-state with a world government have been around for centuries, and gained many adherents following the catastrophic breakup of the world system in World War I.

World government proponents were deeply ambivalent about the formation of the UN after World War II, recognizing that in important respects it entrenched the nation-state by creating a General Assembly based on national representation and a Security Council reflecting the conventional notion of Great Powers. Advocates of world government were at the time divided about the UN, some saying it was a step in the right direction, others pointing out that you don't leap a great chasm by taking one step at a time. As things are turning out, the former view may have been more prescient.

I confess that I, too, have been ambivalent about the UN. The more gossamer stuff about a worldwide transcendence of differences and the establishment of universal and perpetual peace always struck me as what it is fairly called—globaloney. Perpetual peace and justice await the coming of the Kingdom, which I fully expect in God's good time, which is not yet. That being said, truth and human nature are, ultimately, universal, and there do need to be institutions for the accommodation of differences and containment of conflicts. One cannot help but be impressed also by the strong support the Holy See has given the UN from the start. Although very different, the UN and the Catholic Church share the distinction of being global institutions of moral-political influence. For reasons strategic as well as moral-theological, Rome has an interest in checking the absolutist claims of national sovereignty. As a participant in the UN, however, the Holy See today frequently finds itself allied—notably on population, development, and family issues—with that organization's sharpest critics.

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The UN's Moral Right

In the early nineties I was a presidential appointee to a commission charged with reexamining U.S. policy toward the UN. I embarked upon that with an open mind, eager to learn and ready to have my prejudices corrected. The experience, I must admit, left me depressed about that institution. For one thing, I had not appreciated the pervasiveness and scale of the waste and corruption. Bureaucratic duplication, endless international conferencing, and quota systems in employment that are tantamount to graft and nepotism are pervasive and powerfully resistant to remedy. Much is made in some circles about the fact that the U.S. was for a long time in arrears in paying its dues. The bookkeeping behind that complaint is highly dubious and, in my judgment, the U.S. is right to insist upon fiscal and other reforms rather than pouring billions more dollars into a bottomless hole.

More important, I was struck by the prevailing assumption in UN leadership that it had, by moral right, replaced nation-states as the legitimate governor of the world. I recall a long meeting with then Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in which he complained that member states, and especially the U.S., were morally culpable in not providing the UN with the means to fulfill its role as global policeman, global doctor, global tutor, and global everything else. He seemed to be sincerely puzzled when I and others suggested, ever so respectfully, that his expansive view of the UN mandate was warranted neither by the charter nor by the consent of its members.

As one has too frequent occasion to remark, history has many ironies in the fire, and they surely are not lacking here. One irony is that some member nations actually sense that their status is enhanced by supporting the inflation of the UN's claims to govern. Of the 188 member nations, some are so very small that membership in the UN plays a key part in their claim to nationhood. Middling countries that tend to feel marginalized by the dominant players in international affairs can also feel that they are playing in the major leagues by inflating the importance of the UN and their role in it. Canada and the Scandinavian countries are notable in this respect; they are in the forefront of encouraging NGOs to assume the lead in pressing the UN organization to override national sovereignty. Thus we have the curious circumstance in which sovereign nations seek to enhance their importance by curtailing national sovereignty.

"Civil Society" from the Top Down

A further curiosity is that the NGOs now present themselves as the champions of "civil society." Current enthusiasm for civil society is usually traced to the arguments of Vaclav Havel, the Czech president, and others who posited the claims of civil society against the totalitarian claims of communism, and, earlier than that, to the *To Empower People* manifesto authored by Peter Berger and myself in order to lift up the crucial role of non-governmental "mediating institutions" in public policy. The whole idea of civil society was to distinguish sharply what is public and what is governmental, and thus to make government more accountable to the "people-sized" institutions of society. The irony is that, in the name of civil society, the NGOs at the UN are determined to expand the scope of government—under the auspices of the UN, its auxiliary organizations, and international law—in a manner that would make government accountable to the NGOs, which, in turn, are accountable to nobody but the philanthropies that fund them and their own, typically very small, memberships. The combination of small and middling nations curtailing national sovereignty to enhance their own sense of importance and of NGOs using the idea of civil society to undermine political accountability makes for a fine muddle in trying to understand what is going on.

The listings in the *World Government Address Book* give some idea of the hundreds and hundreds of NGOs that make no bones about their dedication to, well, world government. Some are very handsomely funded indeed; for instance, the Open Society Institute, which is bankrolled by billionaire George Soros. The Commission on Global Governance (CGG) is a major player, and its cochairman Shridath Ramphal, former Secretary General of the British Commonwealth, puts its goal this way: "When we talk about 'governance' and 'democracy,' we have to look beyond governance within countries and democracy within states. We have to look to Global Governance and Democracy within the Global State." The CGG, it has been observed, has a board of directors that looks like it could be the first cabinet of the United States of Earth, including Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission, and Canada's Maurice Strong, long a ubiquitous power in the networks of one-worldism.

In the setting of organizational priorities, the drafting of documents, and public advocacy for "internationally approved" policies, the NGOs have dramatically increased their role in recent years.

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"Global Governance and Democracy within the Global State" means that small groups are able to make rules affecting the domestic affairs of countries that it would have been difficult or impossible to achieve democratically in those countries. Global Democracy is, in fact, an end run around democracy. In this respect, the UN-NGO nexus is becoming an instrument as useful to some activists in advancing their causes as are the courts in their own countries. Whether through the UN or through judicial lawmaking, the result is the usurpation of democratic politics.

A "People's Assembly"

Nobody should doubt the sincerity and determination of those who back these developments that others find troubling. Hillary Clinton has called this version of civil society "the vanguard" of a new international order in which NGOs will be more nearly equal with nation-states. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan says that NGOs are "not only disseminators of public information or providers of services, but shapers of policy, too." They are, he says, "the new superpower" which "information technology has empowered to be the true guardians of democracy and good governance everywhere." Of course there is a measure of ideological hype in such statements, but one cannot help but be impressed with, for instance, the proposal that there should be a second chamber of the UN's General Assembly—a People's Assembly. This proposal is backed by, inter alia, the World Federation of United Nations Associations and former UN Secretary General Jávier Pérez de Cuellar.

UN observer Lorne Gunter comments: "Rather than the People's Assembly being comprised of members or deputies from around the world, elected by and accountable to the people they represent [as is at least theoretically the case with the General Assembly], it would likely be made up of the heads of civil society NGOs, and, under most scenarios, only those NGOs accredited by the UN. In other words, the government would elect the voters." Along with the People's Assembly, there is also a drive to place taxes on international financial transactions, airline flights, and properties deemed global in ownership in order to give the UN a source of funding independent from its member nations—especially from the U.S.

These are not simply ideas being tossed around by a few enthusiasts. At the fiftieth annual meeting of NGOs, Kofi Annan called for a People's Assembly by the year 2000. A Millennium People's Assembly Network (MPAN) is at work drafting a "People's Agenda and Vision for the 21st Century" and planning regional People's Assemblies around the world. A first-ever World Civil Society Conference (WOCSOC) was held in Montreal in December 1999. When the NGOs are challenged as to who are "the people" whom they represent, a conventional response is that their goals are the goals the people would choose for themselves if conservative governments and transnational corporations did not hide from them what is good for them, and good for the world. The intention is thoroughly democratic: the UN-NGO combine has such a high estimate of the wisdom of "the people" that it anticipates the consent of the governed to being governed by those who know best. This is government by anticipatory consent. Admittedly, the people as presently constituted are slow to understand their own interests.

A Formula for Despotism

The aforementioned Jeremy Rabkin notes that the ambitions of the NGOs and the proliferation of dubious international agreements, agencies, and regulations aimed at overriding national sovereignty are "mostly just straws in the wind right now. But people in the movement have big plans and have gained a fair amount of momentum. Mostly this has gone on unchallenged, but the longer it goes on, the harder it will be to put an end to it later." And again, one must underscore that national sovereignty should not be defended uncritically. International agreements and modest institutions to enforce them are necessary, but they should be established and controlled in a manner that is, as much as possible, accountable to the people through their representative political institutions. Of course great inequities and injustices will persist, but they are a lesser evil than "Global Governance and Democracy within the Global State," which is a formula for the despotism of a self-appointed elite. Nobody should deny that most in that elite believe in their own good intentions. Historically and at present, despots typically believe in their own good intentions.

A curious twist in this story is the World Trade Organization (WTO). At its riotous meeting in Seattle last December, President Clinton nearly torpedoed the proceedings by saying the U.S. intended to impose upon other nations American-style labor, environmental, and other regulations. The poor countries understandably revolted against a proposal that would effectively exclude them from the global market. There were reportedly more

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than five hundred organizations protesting the WTO at Seattle, many of them the same NGOs that gravitate around the UN. Suddenly the WTO rather than the UN was where the action was. This, it was said, is where real power, meaning economic power, is located. Some of the protesting world government groups said they were against the WTO undemocratically making the rules for the world. The reality in most cases is that they want the WTO to impose their rules. Quite predictably, out of Seattle came proposals for various instrumentalities that would give NGOs a permanent decision-making role in the WTO. Advocates of world government are not particular about whatever institutions will advance their dream.

In the *New York Times Magazine*, David Rieff takes up related concerns in "The Precarious Triumph of Human Rights." He says that the human rights movement is in trouble because, by its manipulation of the UN and other international organizations, it has lost touch with any constituency that gives it democratic legitimacy. Rieff writes: "Human rights workers sometimes talk of their movement as an emblem of grassroots democracy. Yet it is possible to view it as an undemocratic pressure group, accountable to no one but its own members and donors, that wields enormous power and influence. For example, would there have been a war in Kosovo without the human rights movement? As a supporter of the war in Kosovo, I applaud the result. As a democrat, I worry. It was a moral decision, but it was arrived at undemocratically." He asks a good question. As an opponent of that "humanitarian intervention," I worry not only about the undemocratic factor but, even more, about the way in which human rights are now being exploited as a justification for war. In many parts of the world, and in this country as well, such a development reinforces the cynical view that human rights is little more than a slogan invoked by the U.S. to justify whatever we and whomever we can get to go along with us want to do. And, of course, such cynicism flourishes when the U.S. declines to impose even the most modest penalties on egregious violators of human rights such as China and Sudan.

Rieff draws an interesting parallel. If the human rights movement does not attend to political accountability, he says, "there is a great chance that the human rights paradigm will backfire the way affirmative action did. Affirmative action was also well meant. It drew popular opposition not, for the most part, because it was wrong, but because it was sneaked in, with no serious effort made to win people over. Convinced that their cause was right, its advocates saw no reason to campaign for it among the public at large. Instead, they relied on the courts, the law, and legislation. And eventually, the whole project came undone." Leaving aside whether affirmative action (a.k.a. quotas) is right or wrong, Rieff seems to assume that the people could have been won over, as they can be won over to the globalist push for international courts of justice and other instruments designed to override national sovereignty. That is, it seems to me, a very doubtful assumption in both instances.

In any event, big ambitions are afoot. Forget about the Bilderbergers, the Masons, the Trilateral Commission, and the black helicopters. While keeping our eyes on the NGOs and the human rights movement of international "civil society," we can be grateful that there are also countervailing forces. For instance, the Holy See, some more sensible NGOs, and some third world countries that resist being ruled by George Soros, the Ford Foundation, and allied New York-based globalists. They, soon reinforced, we may hope, by a more clear-eyed U.S. policy, may succeed in recalling the United Nations to its former and more modest self—a necessary, if frequently irritating, instrument of sovereign states in search of cooperation without abdication.

FT

INCORRIGIBLY CHRISTIAN AMERICA

One hears today frequent reference to "post-Christian America." Actually, the idea is not so very new. To cite but one obvious instance, when in 1934 John Dewey wrote *A Common Faith*, he assumed that the hegemony (to use a term in academic fashion today) of Christianity was over. Dewey, who died in 1952 after reigning for more than fifty years as America's most influential public philosopher and educator, appreciated that the churches had not gone out of business, and that they could even be useful in promoting peace, fighting economic injustice, and, more generally, in "stimulating action" for what he called "a divine kingdom on earth." "But," he wrote,

> as long as social values are related to a supernatural for which the churches stand in some peculiar way, there is an inherent inconsistency between the demand and efforts to execute it.

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> On the one hand, it is urged that the churches are going outside their special province when they involve themselves in economic and political issues. On the other hand, the very fact that they claim if not a monopoly of supreme values and motivating forces, yet a unique relation to them, makes it impossible for the churches to participate in promotion of social ends on a natural and equal human basis.

Dewey's thoroughly secular "common faith"—which he did not hesitate to call a secular religion—could accommodate Christianity, on the condition that the latter drop the claims to truth and authority that identify it with the historical phenomenon known as Christianity. Neither was this attitude new with Dewey. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Social Gospel Movement led by Walter Rauschenbusch was warmly welcomed by secularists as a junior partner in the great cause of Progress. It was, to paraphrase Immanuel Kant, a matter of religion within the limits of liberalism. At mid-century, Reinhold Niebuhr provided a religious rationale that was supportive of political causes in a way that made it possible for many people to join the club that historian Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. dubbed "Atheists for Niebuhr." In fairness to Niebuhr, he was a good deal more of an orthodox Christian than one might gather from the way some thinkers and activists selectively employed his elegantly framed "spiritual insights" for their own purposes.

In these and other instances the operative premise, if not always phrased in exactly that way, was "post-Christian America." A while back I was asked to speak at a major Protestant seminary on the theme of post-Christian America. I explained that I had some doubts about the premise underlying the theme, so the seminary rephrased the theme as "Post-Christian America?" My doubts, however, require somewhat more than simply adding a question mark. As awkward as it undoubtedly is for Christians and everyone else, America is, in ways both important and undeniable, a Christian nation. Of course it is frequently pointed out that "nation" has a peculiar meaning in America. It is a nation that includes what might be called sub-nations; it is a culture of subcultures; or, as editorialists like to put it, a community of communities. A Jewish friend who grew up in New York City and lives here still tells me that until she was a teenager she just assumed that Jews constituted a majority of Americans. Even now, she says, when she knows the demographic facts perfectly well, somewhere in the back of her head is the working assumption that at least one-third of the country is Jewish. The rest are Catholics, with a few Episcopalians and black Baptists at the margins, and somewhere far away—in places with names like Mobile, Murfreesboro, and Louisville—lurk threatening tribes of fundamentalists, also known as evangelicals, who resent the Real America that is New York City. She laughs at the fantasy she has of America, but innumerable others have grown up in cultural enclaves that define for them an America that is similarly at odds with the reality.

There is, for all that, a country and nation called America. One way to find out who the Americans are is to ask them. When asked, almost 90 percent of them answer, with no apparent uncertainty, that they are Christians. Survey research of the sort that we call scientific has been asking Americans about their religion since the 1920s. Social scientific interest in the "religion factor" has increased greatly in the last quarter century, and we have assiduous monitoring by such as George Gallup and his Princeton Religion Research Center. A striking aspect of all this research over the decades is how very little things seem to change. Continuity rather than discontinuity is the dominant finding about what Americans say they believe and do religiously.

Of the nearly 90 percent who say they are Christian, the great majority specify that they are some particular kind of Christian. They specify a local church or denomination, or in some cases simply that they are "Protestant," meaning, it would seem, that they are sure they are not Catholic. Findings on questions such as the number of people who go to church regularly vary over the years, but the remarkable thing is that the variation is very slight, usually within a matter of a few percentage points. The general picture is that somewhat more than 40 percent go to church weekly and somewhat over 60 percent do so monthly. The late George Cornell, religion reporter for Associated Press, used to do his annual calculation and then his annual newspaper column announcing that, once again, on any given Sunday of the past year more Americans had attended church than had attended all games of all professional sports in the entire year. He thought this was an important thing to know about America, something that one might not learn from the evening news, and he was undoubtedly right about that.

A Moderate Skepticism

It is appropriate to be just a bit skeptical about such survey research data. How people answer questions cannot tell us, for instance, what they

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really believe. But then, the most experienced spiritual director often cannot tell what the people he counsels really believe, and many of us are sometimes uncertain about what we ourselves really believe. The state of our faith is something that only God knows for sure. But we know what people say they believe and what they say they do, and research methodology can build in some checks against conscious or unconscious deception. In any event, it is no little thing to know what people say about themselves, even if they are, at least in part, describing who they want to be rather than who they actually are. We should not be inordinately skeptical of research data on religion in America. Even if people do not go to church as regularly as they say they do, it is of considerable significance that they say they do, and apparently want to believe that they do, or at least want others to believe that they do.

Determinedly secular commentators, those who want to believe that we are living in post-Christian America, apply a skepticism, even a cynicism, to findings about religion that they do not apply to research data on other subjects. Similarly, theologians and theologically trained believers are often dismissive of what survey research tells us about religion in America. All those statistics do not reflect *authentic* religion, they say. There is no doubt something to that. Many of us have an idea of what constitutes authentic religion or authentic Christianity, and by that standard most people fall far short, perhaps including ourselves.

I confess that I used to be more dismissive of survey research on religion than I am now. Years ago, when I was pastor of a black parish in Brooklyn, I frequently compared such research to the number of people who claimed to be members of our parish, St. John the Evangelist. If you went around that part of Brooklyn and asked people what church they belonged to, you might conclude that St. John's had five thousand or more members. All that meant, I said, is that when they didn't go to church on Sunday they were not just not going to any old church; they were very specifically not going to St. John the Evangelist. So also we might say that "Christian America" means no more than that Christianity is the religion that most Americans would have, if they had a religion. But that, I have come to believe, is altogether too dismissive.

Maybe it is a compliment to religion that we subject it to purity tests from which we exempt other research findings. In a political poll, those who say they are going to vote for candidate *x* are not cross-examined to determine the authenticity of their stated intent. It is taken to be a fact of considerable political interest that so many *say* they are going to vote for candidate *x* and so many *say* they are going to vote for candidate *y*. When it comes to Christian America, however, we tend to be much more skeptical. Ask, for instance, what is the source of personal and public morality, and somewhere around 90 percent of Americans give an answer that is religious in character. They say the source of morality is the Ten Commandments, or the Sermon on the Mount, or the teachings of Jesus, or, more generically, "religion." It is really not very much to the point that two-thirds of those who answer that the Ten Commandments are the source of morality cannot name four of the ten. It would be nice if they could, of course, but the pertinent social and cultural fact—the fact pointed to by the phrase "Christian America"—is that this is what they think is the case regarding morality. Most people have not thought about it very hard, but then neither have most people thought very hard about the answers they give to political pollsters or surveys on almost anything else under the sun. The Christianity of America is as confused as it is incorrigible. *(To be continued next month.)*

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Who in America really cares about the Holocaust? That is a question addressed by Peter Novick in *The Holocaust in American Life* (Houghton Mifflin). Almost all Americans deplore the Holocaust, of course, but Novick suggests that that is mainly a polite gesture toward Jews who ask them to do so. In his review of the book, Elliott Abrams observes: "Novick rightly notes that the Holocaust has been institutionalized—in the museum on the Mall, similar museums in New York and Los Angeles, memorials in many cities, legislative mandates to teach it, and endowed chairs and programs. As Novick says, 'there are by now thousands of full-time Holocaust professionals dedicated to keeping its memory alive.' If, as he reports, all this has had little apparent impact on non-Jewish Americans, it may prove dangerous for Jews by making this horrendous period of Jewish suffering more familiar to them than their own religion. In fact, the prospect is disquieting: professionals churning out Holocaust materials for a diminishing Jewish population that learns more and more about the

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period from 1933 to 1945 and knows less and less about the 4,000 years of Judaism that preceded it." Abrams raises, as he has done frequently and forcefully, important questions for Jews, but I expect both he and Novick underestimate the impact of the Holocaust on the 90 percent of Americans who say they are Christians. To be sure, those Americans are not thinking about it all the time, which is just as well. Neither do they spend much time thinking about, say, slavery. But both those horrors are indelibly imprinted upon the public consciousness. If there is a certain skittishness when it comes to talking about them much, I suspect it is in large part because both have been exploited for ideological purposes: slavery to underscore black victimhood and to mandate compensatory attitudes and policies; the Holocaust as a convenient stick with which the ACLU and its like beat their "Fascist," i.e., conservative, critics. But Abrams does cause one to wonder what people a hundred years from now will make of all those museums, memorials, and endowed chairs.

■ The headline writer of Edinburgh's *Scotsman* clearly succumbed to nostalgia in coming up with "Bishop Stirs Up a Storm Over Sex." I, too, fondly remember the olden days when an Anglican bishop could stir up a storm over sex. The bishop in question this time is Richard Holloway of Edinburgh, the primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church, who gave an interview averring that there's nothing wrong with sodomy and sadomasochism so long as it is consensual. He observed that there are no "moral absolutes" about sex except that it be consensual, which excludes pedophilia and rape. "Mutually consenting sadomasochism, however, stops short of the heavier kind of wounding of people, and so I believe it is up to the people involved," said the bishop. Allowance should presumably be made for those who want to be more heavily wounded. A spokesman for the Church of Scotland, which is Presbyterian, commented, "In general, if the church did have a view about sodomy and sadomasochism, it would be more negative than positive." In general. If it had a view. None of that Anglican wishywashyness among the doughty heirs of John Knox. The report includes this: "The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland refused to comment on Bishop Holloway's comments because he is from a different church." Decidedly.

■ J. Bottum suggests that the killings at Columbine High School may mark a cultural and spiritual turning point (see his "Awakening at Littleton," August/September 1999). Then there was the book *She Said Yes: The Unlikely Martyrdom of Cassie Bernall*, which was written by her mother and quickly climbed up the *New York Times*' best-seller list. No witness to the truth goes unattacked. Stories in the national press claimed Misty Bernall was exploiting her daughter's death for money. In fact, she accepted no advance and proceeds from the book go to a nonprofit foundation and scholarship fund. Other reports have nitpicked details of the story, most of which are addressed in the book and none of which detract from her mother's telling of the life and death of Cassie Bernall. The publisher, Plough Press of Farmington, Pennsylvania, says in a release: "A grieving mother [Misty Bernall] has dared to mourn a murdered child publicly. Now she is losing her daughter a second time—in the pages of the national press." That may be saying too much. But the determination of some, who are part of what St. Paul called the principalities and powers of the present time, to discredit the human capacity to love truth more than life should not go unremarked.

■ The subject of Pius XII and what he should or should not have done will be with us for a while. British church historian Owen Chadwick reviews the John Cornwell book, *Hitler's Pope*, in the *Tablet* and, like most reviewers, finds Cornwell tendentious and unconvincing in his claim that he has unearthed anything new (see William D. Rubinstein's review in FT, January). Anglican Chadwick is widely considered to be *the* authority on the Vatican and World War II. Chadwick offers this fairly common consideration regarding the Pope's prudential judgment: "If a defending attorney were desirable in a historical subject, the main line of the plea would need to be something like this. Take the two contiguous German dioceses of Bishops Galen and Berning. We revere Galen for his courage and have no use for Berning because of his silence. But many more priests in Galen's diocese ended in concentration camps than those from Berning's. The brutes did not take it out on the person of the bishop but knew just where it would hurt most. If a higher than Galen behaved like him, how many thousands more would end in concentration camps?" Then there is another factor that I have not seen mentioned elsewhere: "What about those silences? Let me now try for what is probably the best we can do for this Pope. Remember that the *Imitation* of Thomas à Kempis lay at the heart of his spirituality. He would therefore recall, because he knew it all from memory, the passage *vellem me pluries tacuisse, et inter homines non fuissequare tam libenter loquimus? . . . raro sine laesione conscientiae ad*

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silentium redimus: 'How often I have wished I had kept my mouth shut, and not been one among a group of people—why do we open our mouths so freely? Seldom do we come back to silence without our conscience being troubled by what we have said.' It is more the spirituality of the Carthusian than of the pawn pushed around among armies."

■ Jimmy Carter called him the conscience of Africa, and some thought him the conscience of the world. When Julius Nyerere, president of Tanzania from 1964 to 1985, died last October, obituaries spoke of his gentleness and sense of humor, to which I can testify. I spent time with him in 1971 when I was writing a book on Africa, and I was charmed by his articulate exposition of the case for a "distinctively African sense of community" that made political parties unnecessary. He derided "Westminster parliamentarianism" (i.e., democracy). "If someone wants to disagree with me, he can do so without forming a political party 'in opposition.' Here we are all one family." As I say, I was charmed. I can only plead that I was very young. Although undoubtedly motivated by deep Christian commitment, Nyerere's form of "African socialism," called Ujamaa, ruthlessly uprooted hundreds of thousands of people and, despite massive foreign aid, drove Tanzania into a beggary from which it has never recovered. "His one-party system was not undemocratic," says the obituary in the *Tablet*, "functioning quite differently from Banda's one-party state in Malawi." Banda may have been a more oppressive dictator—although the point is arguable—but Julius Nyerere, who styled himself the Mwalimu or great teacher, was undoubtedly a dictator. There are no democratic dictatorships, as everyone should know by now. *Requiescat in pace.*

■ What happens in the diocese of Birmingham, Alabama, is not usually thought to be of national importance, except that is where Mother Angelica's immensely popular television programming is generated. The Bishop of Birmingham, invoking the full authority of canon law, has issued a decree about how the Mass will be celebrated in that diocese, on television or off. It seems some priests have been celebrating *ad orientem*, meaning that they face the East with their backs to the people. Says the bishop, "As bishop of this diocese, I have, as the successor of the apostles in union with the Holy Father, the absolute duty to protect [the Mass] from innovation or sacrilege." That is heavy duty language. Facing East is certainly not an innovation, since, until the Second Vatican Council, it was the universal Catholic practice for at least fifteen hundred years, with some scholars contending that it goes back to the very beginnings of the Church. And sacrilege? Surely His Excellency misspoke himself. In the decree itself, the bishop says that "the priest facing away from the people causes wonderment and dissension." One might have thought that wonderment is exactly what the Mass should cause. The question of whether the bishop is within his canonical rights and rites has reportedly been appealed to Rome. I hold no brief for celebrating *ad orientem*, but threatening priests with suspension and the removal of their faculties (authority to celebrate the sacraments) does seem a bit over the top. One would like to think that the bishop is equally assiduous in correcting lamentably common liturgical abuses, such as, to name a few, priestly improvising in the rite of the Mass, homilies by non-ordained persons, and playing architectural hide-and-seek with the tabernacle of the Blessed Sacrament. It is good to see a bishop so very serious about liturgical rectitude, even if the focus of his wrath seems somewhat selective and his remedies somewhat draconian.

■ Before the bishops adopted a program for implementing *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, the document aimed at renewing the Catholic identity of colleges and universities, Tim Unsworth of the *National Catholic Reporter* anticipated the move and outlined the liberal fallback position. "If the bishops decide to face Rome rather than their people, it may not be all that bad. Trustees, administrators, faculty, and students can find some wiggle room until the document moves slowly to a back shelf and a new Pope writes something that rescinds it. A few wacky bishops will try to implement the specifics. Most will hope that it just sits on the shelf in the president's office, gathering dust." This is in line with the Ultramundanes' uncompromising obedience over the last thirty years to "a new Pope."

■ In the Talmud, Rabbi Eliezer the Great predicts that "as the footsteps of the messiah approach, shamelessness will spread," and he quotes Micah chapter seven: "son spurning father, daughter rising up against mother, daughter-in-law against mother-in-law—a man's own household his enemies." The distinguished historian Gertrude Himmelfarb takes the last phrase as the title of her reflection on the current rash of "confessional" memoirs that confess not the sins and weaknesses of the authors but of relatives who burdened their

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lives. She cites John Bayley's *Elegy for Iris*, a memoir of his wife, the philosopher and novelist Iris Murdoch, which, while finely written, has the chief effect of admiring John Bayley's caring for her during her descent into Alzheimer's. (Mr. Bayley has since published another book recounting his wife's final days and death.) Then there is James Trilling's now notorious memoir of his father Lionel, "My Father and the Weak-Eyed Devils," in the *American Scholar*. Lionel Trilling was one of the most respected literary and social critics of his time, but in the view of his undistinguished son he was a tangle of neuroses attributable to attention deficit disorder (ADD), from which the son says he also suffers. James follows in the footsteps of his mother, Diana, who tried to take her husband down a few notches in her own memoirs. Himmelfarb writes: "Later in discussing his tendency to depression, she observes that 'he was at pains not to disclose it even to his closest friends'—whereupon she proceeds to disclose it to the world." Himmelfarb's final example is the biographer Phyllis Rose, who, against her brother-in-law's strongly expressed wishes, published an intimate account of his abandoning a successful career as a concert pianist in order to become a contemplative monk. Iris Murdoch, Lionel Trilling, and the monk are, says Himmelfarb, all "victims of this new form of spousal or parental or filial abuse." She adds: "We have not yet had a parallel case of child abuse—a parent exposing the faults of a child. But perhaps that too will come."

■ My frequently stated view, which for some reason has not yet gained unanimous assent, is that the Revised Standard Version of the Bible (not the New RSV!) is, all in all, the best in English. The New International Version (NIV) also has much to recommend it, and is the best-seller in the Bible market. Now *World* magazine says a bunch of new translations are coming on line. Paige Patterson, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, declares, "We have over-translated and we have ruined Bible memorization and congregational reading. We have translation pandemonium out there." It is true that the proliferation of translations has pretty much destroyed what was once a shared biblical vocabulary, and it seems almost impossible that that could be restored. In any event, according to *World*, a group of evangelical Protestants have been negotiating with the National Council of Churches, which owns rights to the RSV. "An agreement was reached in September 1998 allowing translators freedom to modify the original text of the RSV as necessary to rid it of de-Christianing translation choices." I suppose the re-Christianing of the RSV can only make a good thing better. I suppose.

■ Dr. Mark Evans is famous, as it were, for his proficiency in "fetal reductions," which means getting rid of the "extras" in multiple pregnancies. He is featured in *ACM News*, a publication of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, in an article titled "New Technologies Raise New Questions." The article notes that "there are those who have raised concerns about the ethical issues [in genetic research]." Dr. Evans says, "These are not really new issues. Genetics as a clinical speciality has really been around for thousands of years. In ancient Sparta, for example, a child born with genetic abnormalities would undergo a sacred ritual and then be thrown over a cliff. This was actually the first HMO model." And so one might be tempted to think that, in the long twilight struggle between Athens and Sparta, between civilization and barbarism, Sparta is winning after all.

■ Dr. Denise Chen of the Monell Chemical Science Center in Philadelphia persuaded volunteers to strap gauze pads to their armpits for ten hours. She then gave the pads to university students and assessed their mood before and after sniffing them. The students did not know where the odors had come from. The armpits belonged to three age groups—over seventy, early twenties, and three to eight. Dr. Chen discovered that those who had inhaled from old women's armpits ended up in a better mood. Young men's armpits had a depressing effect. While female armpit odors were generally favored over male, the very best effects were produced by sniffing the grannies. So you think every item in these pages should have a point?

■ Catholic lovers, it seems, are not immune from the fashionable indifference toward marriage. In 1995, nearly half the couples in Catholic marriage-prep classes already shared an address. Most parishes, of course, are happy to help cohabiting couples enter into marriage. Some are so encouraging they ignore the cohabitation completely. But a recent report from the National Conference of Catholic Bishops shows that many late marriages are doomed to fail without a little tough love before the wedding day. The bishops admonish priests and lay ministers to discuss cohabitation with couples they know or suspect are living together. They warn that the distorted values of a cohabiting relationship, if left unexamined,

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may persist and poison the marriage. Cohabiting partners usually report that independence and economic equality come first in their relationships. After marriage, they find it hard to discard the old expectations and start giving generously of themselves and their resources. Ironically, fear of divorce is another common explanation partners give for living together. They suppose they can avoid divorce by a "trial" period of living together. Most often, the opposite is true. Although cohabiting couples who eventually marry have more stable relationships than those who never marry, they still divorce at a rate 50 percent higher than couples who do not live together before the wedding. Nonetheless, the bishops maintain that lovers who want to be married as Catholics are a sign of hope in a culture where marriage seems superfluous. The bishops trust that, armed with a sober appreciation of the obstacles cohabiting partners face, the Church can help couples transform tentative relationships into Christian marriages based on a faithful, exclusive, and permanent gift of the self.

■ The *Sunday Times* of London has joined a large number of hackers in proposing that the seventh-century St. Isidore of Seville should be named the patron saint of the Internet. Isidore, who wrote numerous books on everything from agriculture to medicine to theology, is credited with being the first author who developed a database. It's not official yet, but I thought you might want to know in anticipation of the next time the lines are down. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*: "His works became a storehouse of knowledge freely utilized by innumerable medieval authors." His major work, *Origines*, is an encyclopedia "organized on the principle that etymologies usually give information on the things to which the words refer. Derivative and often fanciful, it is impressive overall, and a valuable source for the learning and thought of the time." It sounds like the Internet to me. So it wasn't Al Gore after all. It was St. Isidore.

■ The jeremiad is a venerable genre to which this department has made modest contributions. The following instance is from an address by Stephen H. Balch, president of the National Association of Scholars, at that organization's eighth annual conference, held in Chicago. After noting the remarkable success of NAS in opening academic doors that had previously been shut, Balch declaims: "More than anything else, what much of the university has been teaching us is *hubristics*, the world's first academic *indiscipline*. To give it full credit, it is in fact inter-indisciplinary, since it pervades the curriculum, misinforming teaching and scholarship in a large multitude of domains. Wherever it is found its guiding insight is the same: we lead a charmed life. A student's encounter with hubristics often begins in his first composition course, Hubristics 101 if you will, where he or she may be taught that clear communication has less importance than authentic self-expression and ideologically approved thought. It is next usually displayed in the anarchy of general education requirements, which encourages students to believe that a knowledge of civilization's architecture is something that can be readily self-assembled. Upper division offerings include cud-chewing courses which regurgitate the contents of pop culture, cheerleading courses which extol the glories of pet groups, and consciousness-raising courses that unmask the past as a conspiracy against the present. What all have in common is the assumption of self-sufficiency, the belief that each of us, and the brave new world we inhabit, can go merrily along forever, beholden to nothing more than our own inherent wisdom and virtue. Hubris is not a vice that has been typically associated with institutions of higher learning, either in the Western world at large, or in America specifically. Of pride, even of arrogance, there has always been an abundance. But recklessness has been rare, at least at the level of whole institutions and entire fields of learning. Quite the contrary, academic pride has usually gone hand in hand with smugness and complacency, with the belief that the academy was the guardian of a rich inherited wisdom into which the young had to be repeatedly initiated and of which their elders had to be continually reminded. When they occurred, battles for intellectual freedom were generally fought against intellectually conservative forces, frequently embodied in, if not confined to, the senior authorities of the universities themselves. The recent picture has been radically different. Rather than deploying inherited wisdom as a means of associating itself with traditional elites, the university has been disparaging tradition, in order to become one with popular taste. Consequently, its posture toward the past has tended to be that of airy superiority, or, sometimes, open mockery. And rarely is the past genuinely engaged. More often it is demeaned by being conspicuously ignored or visibly flouted. The replacement of the study of serious literature by the study of popular culture is not meant to enhance the appreciation of pop culture, a wholly unnecessary endeavor, but to abase literature. Likewise, academic conferences featuring panels of

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Elvis impersonators, or the owners of sex boutiques, are not meant to add to our knowledge of rock or country music, or to make us more erotically proficient—equally unnecessary exercises. They are meant to ridicule the normal proprieties of scholarship. Throughout, the point is not to learn something new, but to taunt learning and the learned." One cause of the sorry state of the academy, Balch opines, is that people in the humanities envy the hard sciences. In a misguided effort to close the gap between the "the two cultures," humanists join the sciences in denying privileged status to inherited belief. But you'll have to get the entire address to see how he develops that insight. Balch concludes with this: "Perhaps many of our undergraduates go to college primarily to party. Perhaps many have always done so. But the faculty should not join them in their revels. They should demonstrate instead that there are higher callings, and that the party itself cannot continue unless someone pays the bills and guards the door. Seriousness of purpose; the need for measure, endurance, foresight, and self-control; life's irreducible complexity and the hard choices that entails are all things our universities, and those within them who call themselves humanists, should be trying to convey. And not only by word, but through the spirit in which they practice their professions as well. Sadly, not enough are now trying. With some help from a growing cohort of friends, it will be this organization's task to get them once more to do so." For more information on the National Association of Scholars, write 221 Witherspoon Street, 2nd Floor, Princeton, New Jersey 08542-3215.

■ Canada's Defense Department has issued a paper condemning the use of human clones for military purposes and calling for an international treaty to ban any attempts toward that end. The paper says it is "an affront to human dignity and worth" to produce a class of individuals to serve as disposable soldiers. That declaration of moral sense is joined, however, to a proposal that the government encourage research on the "invaluable" technology of cloning to produce replacement parts for injured soldiers. Such technology includes producing, using, and destroying human embryos, which, says columnist Susan Martinuk in the *National Post*, may also raise some questions about "human dignity and worth." The idea of disposable human beings is as odious in the laboratory as on the battlefield.

■"Globalization" has become a synonym for capitalism in some circles, including Christians not yet fully weaned from the excitements of Marxist class struggle. Speaking to the Centesimus Annus Foundation (named for his 1991 encyclical on the free and just society), John Paul II insisted that the dynamics of globalization "do not in themselves have a negative connotation." "Globalization," he said, "will have very positive effects if it is grounded in a strong sense of the absolute character and dignity of all human persons and the principle that the earth's goods are for all." He went on to discuss the difficulties of institutionalizing such moral imperatives in international economics, truly a daunting task. As the Pope said in the encyclical, he prefers "market economy" or "free economy" to "capitalism." Capitalism, even "democratic capitalism," is not a "system" that can define an entire society. Nor is a market economy the same thing as a market society. A market society implies that everything in society is up for grabs, to be determined by economic exchange. In *Centesimus Annus* and elsewhere, it is clear that the Catholic Church does not propose an alternative form of political economy, and the idea of a "third way" somehow located between capitalism and socialism is explicitly rejected. What the Church does is bear witness both to the creative capacities of man in producing wealth *and* to the imperative that creativity be exercised in a way that respects the absolute dignity of persons and is aimed at including everyone "in the circle of productivity and exchange." Those who dismiss such witness as mere moralizing are in fact declaring their inability or unwillingness to respond to moral truth.

■ A mover and shaker in the National Institutes of Health promotion of creating and killing human embryos in stem cell research is Brigid Hogan, a British researcher at Vanderbilt University. Her real passion, though, is for mouse embryos. *New York Times* science writer Nicholas Wade, in a flattering profile of Dr. Hogan, waxes enthusiastic about "the magical moment when the mouse embryo changes from a blob to a being." It's no surprise that he is into magic; that's what happens when you abandon logic. As for Dr. Hogan, she says mouse embryos are things of beauty. "I carry a picture of a mouse embryo in my wallet to look at if I'm feeling low, like people carry pictures of their family." One is put in mind of P. D. James' wonderfully chilling novel, *The Children of Men*, depicting a time when human beings can no longer have babies and resort to all kinds of baby substitutes for consolation in their cold and sterile world.

■ The Orthodox Union's National Conference of

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Synagogue Youth has completed a massive study of Jewish young people, with some encouraging conclusions about the pattern of return to religious observance. The moving spirit of the conference and of the study (to which I was a not very helpful advisor) is Rabbi Pinchas Stolper. His message to Jewish youth: "Either the Torah is true or it is a lie—there is no possible or acceptable middle ground. Either we're right or wrong. And the most serious and important challenge of life is to determine in your own mind what the truth really is." For more information about the study, write Rabbi Stolper at the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, 333 Seventh Avenue, New York, New York 10001. (This is written at a time when there is renewed, and unwarranted, controversy about the Southern Baptist Convention "targeting" Jews in their evangelization efforts. There will likely be Jews and Christians disagreeing about the fullness of the truth until Our Lord returns in glory, but, in a culture largely bent toward the denial of the very idea of truth, telling the truth about the importance of "what the truth really is" is a message to be warmly welcomed.)

■ Social welfare that works aims not at delivering services but at changing lives. That is a maxim reflected in *The Welfare of My Neighbor: Living Out Christ's Love for the Poor* by Deanna Carlson. The 134-page book comes with a workbook and guide to help local churches get more effectively involved in welfare that works. Available from the Family Research Council, 801 G Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20001 for a suggested donation of $15 (discounts for multiple copies).

■ When the Pope visited Georgia last November, observers noted that President Edward Shevardnadze welcomed him by speaking of Christian unity while the head of the Orthodox Church limited himself to comments about better relations between countries. Shortly after that visit, the Russian Patriarch once again made clear that the Pope is not welcome in Russia. He has been repeatedly invited by the Russian government, but he has made clear that he will not go unless and until a visit would advance Christian unity between East and West. Helpful light is cast on this nettlesome question by Father Enzo Bianchi, prior of the Bose Ecumenical Community in Italy, and an expert on the Church in the East: "EB: We must realize that conditions do not yet exist for dialogue—the fruit of conviction—with the Orthodox Churches. Q: Exactly what is missing? EB: They suffer from the past. From the East, the Orthodox have been threatened by the Ottomans, Islam, and the Mongols, and from the West, by Catholicism and Protestantism. This memory is still very alive. And there is the question of the Uniates. Although this problem does not exist in Georgia, the same lesson is there. The Orthodox world is circumscribed in a defensive psychology that does not proselytize. Given this reality, our certitude of universality at times runs the risk of not being properly understood. Q: So then, this isn't just a matter of different cultures, but of unassimilated history? EB: For them, evangelization is a word that rhymes with conquest. Q: How can they be made to understand that this isn't the case? EB: The Orthodox do not distinguish clearly what comes from the West. For them, ecumenism is something the regime favored. The Soviets acted in the name of ideology. They are mistrustful. And they see the evils of Western Civilization. Q: But last May, John Paul II had a very different experience in Romania. EB: Yes, but Romania is Latin in language and culture. The Slavic Church has always felt the need for freedom. The [Orthodox] Church in Georgia is the only one that left the World Council of Churches—slamming the door. It fears invading ecumenism. The [Orthodox] Synod . . . was negative about the papal visit. Q: To what degree is Moscow responsible for Georgians' attitude? EB: Before the trip, the Patriarchy made a harsh statement: 'You are dismantling the united Orthodox front that desires an end to Roman proselytism.' This was more a human reaction than evangelical. But they are not our contemporaries: they must recover decades. And for them, universality does not have the value that it has for us. Q: What should our attitude be? EB: The trip . . . has taken place. The Pope has his foot on the accelerator. His desire for reconciliation is very strong. Sooner or later it will have an effect. Someone will have the courage to ask: 'Why haven't we responded?'"

■ Here is a development deserving more attention than it has received to date. Last November the National Bible Association and the First Amendment Center issued a thoughtful document titled, "The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide." The premise is that an adequate education requires teaching *about* the Bible—as distinct from ignoring it, which is the almost universal practice today in public schools, and from teaching the Bible doctrinally and devotionally, which is, according to the courts, unconstitutional. The remarkable thing about the new guide is that it is endorsed by a very broad

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array of organizations, ranging from the National Association of Evangelicals to the National Education Association. A very good argument can be made that the attempt to teach the Bible in a "neutral" manner is, in fact, to teach against the Bible, which is hardly neutral. And a convincing argument can be made that, for serious Christians and Jews, a truly adequate education is education in the fullness of truth presented as the truth. That being said, however, for at least the short-term future most American children will be attending public schools dominated by the myths of neutrality toward the differences that make the deepest difference. "The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide" can, all in all, make their education less inadequate. But for that to happen, the guide must be implemented, and for that to happen, people must know about it. For a copy of the guide, write National Bible Association, 1865 Broadway, New York, New York 10023.

■ Lest you thought it was all sweetness and light surrounding the Joint Declaration on Justification signed by the Holy See and the Lutheran World Federation on October 31 of last year, 251 teachers of theology in Germany have issued a blistering protest claiming that the whole enterprise "has been one-sidedly influenced by the ecumenism program of the Roman Catholic Church." In other words, the Lutherans have been taken. The theological imperialism of the protesters—demanding that the statement say exactly what Lutherans have traditionally said about "faith alone," law and gospel, *simul iustus et peccator* (at the same time justified and sinner), etc.—might give the impression that they represent hard-core orthodoxy. That apparently is the view of some in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who are circulating the protest as support for Missouri's refusal to be part of the Joint Declaration. But note one of the chief reasons for the German protest: "The signing of the Joint Declaration would result in no improvements whatsoever in the practicalities of Protestants and Catholics living together in families and in congregations. At this point it becomes clear that the meaning of the doctrine of justification as the center of the teaching and life of the Church has been ineffectual in these texts." In this line of reasoning, which has the most liberal, even antinomian, consequences, "justification by faith alone" is the only article of faith that matters. If one really believes in justification by faith alone, differences over other matters—the real presence in the Eucharist, apostolic ministry, the indissolubility of marriage, the ordination of women, and on and on—make no difference. That is hardly the position of conservative Lutherans such as those of the Missouri Synod. Even more questionable is the Missouri Synod's placement of an ad in *USA Today* and fifteen other newspapers around the country explaining why it rejects the Joint Declaration. (It does not mention that the LCMS declined to be part of the years of intense theological conversations that led to the Declaration.) After setting forth what Missouri understands to be the Lutheran teaching of justification by "faith alone," the ad depicts Catholic teaching in this way: "The Roman Catholic Church teaches that something more than trust in Christ is necessary for us to be saved. It teaches that we are able to merit, through our works, eternal life for ourselves and others. We believe this teaching obscures the work of Jesus Christ and clouds the central message of the Bible." That statement, sad to say, obscures the teaching of the Catholic Church. The rich biblical understanding of faith, including the living faith that transforms the life of the believer, is reduced simply to trust. It is emphatically not the case that the Catholic Church teaches that our works, apart from the work of Christ and faith in that work, merit eternal life for ourselves or others. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: "Justification has been *merited for us by the Passion of Christ* who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. . . . Justification is at the same time *the acceptance of God's righteousness* through faith in Jesus Christ" (Nos. 1991 and 1992, emphasis in original). From the Joint Declaration: "Together we confess: By grace alone, in faith in Christ's saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works" (3.15). The caricature of Catholic teaching in the LCMS ad is not true. Those responsible for it would do well to consult Luther's Small Catechism on bearing false witness. (One is pleased to note that Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, former president of the LCMS, has publicly repudiated the advertisement, pointing out that it was unauthorized, paid for by a private contribution, and represents no more than "the personal opinion of the current president." The ad has also been protested publicly by a large number of LCMS clergy and local parishes.) In my judgment, Father Avery Dulles got it just right in his article in our December issue, "Two Languages of Salvation." There are still unresolved differences between Lutherans and Catholics on justification,

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but they should not be church-dividing. Had it not been for the unpleasantness of the sixteenth century, Lutheranism might have become a distinct tradition of spirituality—somewhat like the Franciscans or Dominicans—in full communion with the one Church that Luther wanted to reform. But that, of course, is one of history's great might-have-beens. As it is, the Joint Declaration is a historic achievement moving Lutherans and Catholics, please God, toward the ecclesial reconciliation that is yet to be.

■ The American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association have officially protested what they view as a misrepresentation of their position on pedophilia. Their protesting statements affirm laws against sexual relationships between adults and children. Fair enough, but that is somewhat beside the point. While avoiding obvious legal landmines, the associations have been moving since the 1970s toward legitimating homosexuality, along with pedophilia and other "paraphiliac" behavior (e.g., sadomasochism), in that they are no longer listed as mental disorders unless they cause distress or impair the social functioning of those who indulge in such behavior. The question is not whether the associations favor decriminalizing pedophilia. They do not. But their area of presumed competence is mental disorders, not changing the law. A change has been made in the definition of mental disorders, and their protest would be made credible only by rescinding the change. One might surmise that practitioners of "man-boy love" do not feel distress about what they do, nor, within that subculture, is their social functioning impaired. It is accurate to say that the associations appear to be on a course toward "normalizing" behavior that previously was judged to be perverse and disordered, and is still illegal. Whatever their intentions, it is foreseeable that such a course might at some point have a bearing on changes in the law. Although the associations deplore it, the reality is that mental disorder bears a social stigma. Officially removing that stigma is a step toward normalizing certain actions, or at least delegitimating objections to them, which is much the same thing. The disingenuity of, for instance, the American Psychological Association in claiming that it does not advocate the acceptance or legitimation of homosexuality is all too clear from its membership in the "Just the Facts Coalition," along with the National Education Association and other groups. The coalition recently sent out a booklet to all 14,700 public school districts in the country attacking those who contend that teenagers can and should resist or redirect, rather than act upon, their homoerotic desires. "I think this is a history-changing moment," says Kevin Jennings of the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network, a New York organization. "The entire mainstream education and mental health establishment has said that it isn't lesbian, gay, and bisexual students who need to change, it is the conditions in our schools that need to change." Mr. Jennings and his allies have good reason to be pleased.

■ Here's a nice juxtaposing of stories in the *Chronicle of Higher Education.* At the top of the page is a story with the headline "Bishops Approve Controversial Rules for Catholic Higher Education." It is, of course, about the overwhelming vote of the bishops for implementing *Ex Corde Ecclesiae,* a measure aimed at advancing the controversial view that schools claiming to teach Catholic theology teach Catholic theology. Directly below it is another story, "NLRB Official Says Professors at Manhattan College, a Private Institution, Can Unionize." In an eighty-one-page decision the National Labor Relations Board explains why the New York college run by the Christian Brothers "wasn't Catholic enough to be excluded from the board's jurisdiction over labor relations." Walker Percy said it's either Rome or California. In Catholic higher education, it may be that it's either the bishops or the labor unions.

■ Blaming the victim? Definitely not. But that is how more than one reader interpreted my response to Arthur Simon of Bread for the World in the December 1999 issue. So let me try again. There are undoubtedly many thousands of children in the U.S. who go to bed hungry at night. It is impossible to know how many, but any hungry child has to be cause for concern. On the basis of my working with poor people over many years and of my study of the relevant literature, I believe that "consumption" is a better indicator of poverty than "income," much of which is unreported, and undetectable except as evidenced in consumption. Most hungry children are not hungry only, or even chiefly, for economic reasons, i.e., the lack of money to buy food. Broken and violent homes, sundry forms of child neglect and abuse, typically associated with alcoholism, drugs, and other adult disorders—these are the circumstances usually associated with children going hungry. The children are the victims and are certainly not to be blamed. It is true that the adults who should be caring for these children need help, and an essential part of help is helping them to recognize that they are failing in their duty. This is

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the kind of help provided by innumerable nongovernmental efforts aimed not at "delivering services" to "clients" but at transforming lives through personal involvement with those in need. Such efforts, typically "faith-based" (in the current jargon), need to be multiplied many times over. My criticism of Bread for the World is that its advocacy is captive to discredited welfare policies that have exacerbated the problem of "welfare dependency" and have had the unfortunate effect of discrediting concern for the poor in the minds of many Americans. This raises the prospect of America becoming what Charles Murray calls a "custodial democracy," in which the underclass is subsidized but walled off. We increase the number of homeless shelters and food pantries, restore the welfare entitlement, build more prison cells, and write off a substantial part of the population as permanently incapable of citizenship. Meanwhile, the great majority of Americans go on with business as usual. "Custodial democracy" is a grim prospect, and we must not resign ourselves to it. (For a fuller statement of what can and should be done, see, among other items in these pages, the editorial "What Should We Do About the Poor?" [April 1992] and Glenn C. Loury's "Two Paths to Black Power" [October 1992].)

■ Much has been written about "the scandal of the evangelical mind," or lack thereof. Pertinent to that discussion may be a thoughtful list offered by *World* magazine of the forty most important books of the last hundred years, meaning books "that proclaimed or applied a Christian worldview in a hostile century." Not all the authors who make the list have a clear religious identity, but, of those who do, there are six Roman Catholics, five Anglicans, one Orthodox, and five mainline Protestants. There are also four Jews, none of them religiously observant. Of the seven evangelical Protestant authors (e.g., Francis Schaeffer, Cornelius Van Til, Harold Lindsell, A. W. Tozier), it is fair to say that none of them would be named, and most of them would not be known, outside the world of evangelicalism. I'm not sure what this says about the alleged scandal, if anything, but one notes that evangelicalism in its present configuration was around for half of the century surveyed. Of Francis Schaeffer the editors correctly say that he "taught evangelicals to become engaged with culture, art, and the world of ideas." One may reasonably hope that at the end of this new century—"if the Lord tarries," as evangelicals are given to saying—a comparable list would demonstrate that evangelicals moved from a still nervous engagement to making substantive contributions that put the whole world in their debt.

■ They're baaack! Or maybe it's more accurate to say they're still around. "Humanist Manifesto 2000" does not have a list of signatories anywhere near the status of those who signed the first manifesto in 1933, but Paul Kurtz and his International Academy of Humanism did manage to recruit nine Nobel laureates and comedian Steve Allen. The new manifesto urges humanity to "leave behind the magical thinking and myth-making that are substitutes for tested knowledge of nature," notes that religions "have their origins in pre-urban nomadic and agricultural societies of the past" and are irrelevant to the "postindustrial global information culture that is emerging," and calls for a World Parliament. In a world of such rapid change, it is something of a comfort that Professor Kurtz and his friends keep alive an old, if eccentric, tradition.

■ We have framed in the office this photo of six-month-old Andrew Zaleski, son of Philip and Carol Zaleski of Smith College, lying on the living room carpet. He is holding a copy of First Things, and for all the world seems to be reading it with pleasure. Underneath is the legend, "And some people say this is over their heads?" It's never too early to get your younger friends into a good habit. We will be happy to send a sample issue of this journal to people you think are likely subscribers. Please send names and addresses to First Things, 156 Fifth Avenue, Suite 400, New York, New York 10010 (or e-mail to subscriberservices@pma-inc.net). On the other hand, if they're ready to subscribe, call toll-free 1-800-783-4903.

■ The fallacy of misplaced expertise seems to work overtime when distinguished scientists deliver themselves of their ponderings philosophical and theological. Steven Weinberg has both the Nobel Prize and the National Medal of Science for his work on the theory of particles and fields and—under the title "A Designer Universe?"—offered to a meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science the usual college dormitory bull session reasons for answering the question in the negative. There is evil in the world, and it cannot be explained by free will because then God is responsible for giving us free will, and so forth and so on. This drearily flat-footed account of the theodicy question is deemed worthy of publication in the *New York Review of Books*. The aim of the meeting was to have a constructive dialogue

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between science and religion, to which Weinberg says: "I am all in favor of a dialogue between science and religion, but not a constructive dialogue. One of the great achievements of science has been, if not to make it impossible for intelligent people to be religious, then at least to make it possible for them not to be religious. We should not retreat from this accomplishment." Along the way, Weinberg repeats what has become a maxim in some circles: "With or without religion, good people can behave well and bad people can do evil; but for good people to do evil—that takes religion." His case in point is slavery, which he says, falsely, is "endorsed in the New Testament," although, to be sure, slavery was both supported and opposed by Christians. It is the maxim that warrants a moment's thought, however. The proposition would seem to be that, if good people who are not religious do evil, they are not good people. They are bad people. If good people who are religious do evil, they are good people misled by religion. To stay just with the last century, it follows that there were no good people involved in the murder of more than a hundred million people in the name of National Socialism, Marxist-Leninism, and Maoism. They were, if we are to believe Professor Weinberg, all bad people. It is a wondrously simple view of the world, sustained perhaps by devoting one's life to the study of particles and fields rather than people, beginning with oneself.

Sources: Quotes on UN from "Whose World Is It, Anyway?" by Lorne Gunter, *National Post*, August 28, 1999 and "The Precarious Triumph of Human Rights" by David Rieff, *New York Times Magazine*, August 8, 1999.

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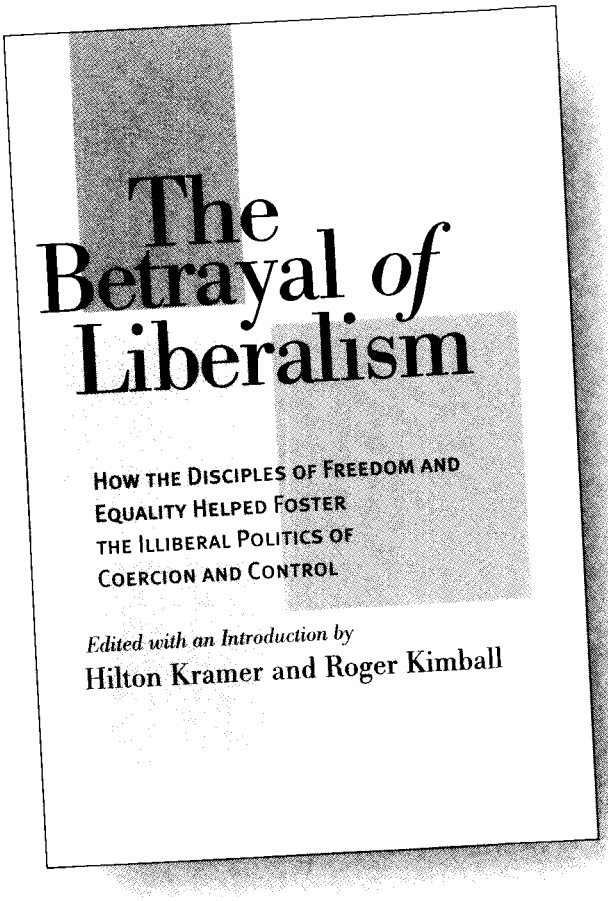
What liberalism means and what it stands for now

The Betrayal of Liberalism

Edited With an Introduction by Hilton Kramer and Roger Kimball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